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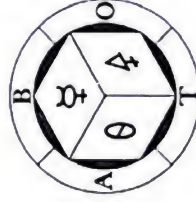
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# THE GREAT WORK

(Spiritual Alchemy)

Lesson No. I



Builders Of The Adytum

# THE GREAT WORK

## Lesson One

The Great Work, often termed the Magnum Opus, is thus defined by Eliphas Levi:

"The magnum opus is pre-eminently the creation of man by himself, that is, the full and complete conquest which he can make of his faculties and his future; it is pre-eminently the perfect emancipation of his will which . . . assures full power over the Great Magical Agent. This Magical Agent, which the old Hermetic philosophers disguised under the name of the First Matter of the Magnum opus, determines the species of modifiable substance, and metallic transmutation, as well as the universal medicine, can be really attained by its means. This is no hypothesis, it is a fact already tested, and rigorously demonstrable."

Thus we may understand the Great Work to be the secret operation described in the books of the true alchemists. In order to understand the work, we must know what alchemy really is. To arrive at this understanding, we begin with the commonly accepted exoteric definition of the Hermetic Art, given in WEBSTER'S NEW INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY:

"Alchemy, --The medieval chemical science, whose great objects were the transmutation of the baser metals into gold, and the discovery of the universal cure for diseases and means of indefinitely prolonging life."

So far as it goes, this definition is true. Full success in the Great Work does give those who attain it extraordinary power over physical condition, enabling them to achieve the practical results of metallic transmutation, cure of all diseases, and tremendous prolongation of the span of man's physical existence. Yet the definition is misleading because it makes it appear that the various operations of alchemy are directed primarily to these objectives, whereas the truth is that the Great Work, as Eliphas Levi says, has to do, first of all, with man himself.

The Philosophers' Stone, which is the Hermetic Symbol for the things made by the Great Work, is not a physical substance manufactured in a chemical laboratory. It is a transmuted and perfected state of human personality. By means of this transformed personality, the true Stone of the Wise, are effected the works of power which give an alchemical adept command over all forms and forces of the physical plane.

It is true that success in the Great Work enables an alchemist to transmute metals and cure diseases by means of a physical thing, external to his body. Yet he cannot make this transmuting agent, nor perfect the Universal Medicine, unless he himself has become the true Stone. The records of Hermetic Art include the histories of several persons, not themselves adepts, who by one means or another came into possession of the external physical agent we have just mentioned. Sometimes they received it as a gift, sometimes they found a certain quantity of it. Always they were the worse for their unmerited acquisition of unusual power. While their supply of the agent lasted, they effected marvelous cures and performed metallic transmutations. Because they could not make the substance whereby they achieved these results, not having become



the Hidden Stone, when their supply was exhausted they could not replenish it. Moreover, since they had not undergone the inner transmutation which enables one to employ the external agent wisely, their foolish display of power brought disaster upon them.

Alchemical books are hard to understand because they are intentionally cryptic. They are written in veiled language, full of obscure symbols. Their authors use enigmas, ciphers, blinds and various other devices, in order to conceal their true meaning from uninitiated readers. True sages, Jean d'Espagnet tells us, never actually lie, but he adds: "Truth lies hid in obscurity; for Philosophers never write more deceitfully--than when plainly, nor more truly--than when obscurely."

The true import of alchemical literature is the harder to discover because there are three classes of alchemical books. The first class comprises the works of genuine adepts, links in the chain of oral tradition which transmits Hermetic Science from one generation to another. The second class consists of books written by persons who misunderstood the writings of true adepts, and supposed them to be no more than explanations of processes whereby physical metals might be transmuted by chemical means. To the third class belong worthless productions of charlatans who had nothing to tell, but wrote their spurious volumes in order to make gold by the process of extracting it from the purses of their dupes.

Fortunately, the oral tradition of Hermetic Science has never died out. Adepts live today who are as fully versed in the mysteries of the Great Art, as fully skilled in its practical application, as were any whose names have come down to us from the past.

From such living wise men these instructions come to you, for the Builders of the Adytum form a link in the long chain of oral tradition. We are the happy possessors of keys to the cryptic meaning of the images and symbols of the true sages. We shall use those keys to give you a clear exposition of alchemical doctrine, free from many blinds which were necessary in less liberal periods of history.

We do not pretend to reveal all the secrets of Hermetic Science. There is much that we are obliged to hold in reserve. What we do communicate, however, is free from deliberate distortions of meaning.

What you read here is a faithful transmission of received knowledge. A great deal of it has been tested by the practice of those who are immediately responsible for putting it into your hands. We do not set ourselves up as adepts in alchemy who have attained to the completion of the Great Work. But we do claim to have definite experimental knowledge of the fact that these principles really work. We enjoy the further privilege of having before us the example of living adepts who have completed the Great Work, and are in full possession of all the benefits accruing therefrom. It is really from them that this instruction comes to you.

Your own success in the Great Work does not depend on your acceptance of our claim. If you put the instruction itself to the tests of reason, intuition and experiment,



you will demonstrate its truth. Furthermore, you will find out for yourself, long before you attain to the final goal of the Great Work, that there really is an Inner School of adepts, the custodians of the mysteries of Ageless Wisdom, and that these studies in Tarot and Hermetic Science originate in that Inner School.

The greater number of alchemical books now extant were written after the twelfth century, but the beginnings of the Great Art may be traced to a much earlier period. For example, a fundamental doctrine of alchemy is this:

"That which is above is as that which is below, and that which is below is as that which is above, for the performance of the miracles of the One Thing."

These words, you will remember, are from THE EMERALD TABLET OF HERMES. They are quoted again and again by alchemists. Tradition ascribes them to Hermes Trismegistus, and occult revery has run wild concerning the personality of that shadowy Egyptian adept. Sober scholarship, however, concludes that THE EMERALD TABLET is a comparatively modern work, composed long after the beginning of the Christian Era.

Yet its doctrine is much older, for it is stated explicitly in the Hindu KATHA UPANISHAD. The KATHA UPANISHAD, moreover, is by no means the only Indian book containing distinct expressions of alchemical doctrine. A little farther on we shall see that India had a sect whose ideas were basically the same as those of some of the Western alchemists.

We shall see also that the objects of yoga and alchemy are the same. We shall find, too, that yogis and alchemists are agreed in their descriptions of phenomena. East may be East, and West West, but however far apart they may be in some respects, they do meet on the common ground of experience the East calls yoga, and the West, alchemy.

So far as can be learned, Jacob Boehme, the mystical alchemist of Goerlitz, Germany, never met a Hindu in the flesh; but when we read his MYSTERIUM PANSPHICUM, we know that his words, based on his own direct perception of the inner nature of things, would offer little difficulty to an Eastern occultist. In the Fifth Text of this little treatise, the fourth paragraph says:

"And thus we are able to recognize an eternal substantiality of Nature, identical with water and fire, which are as it were mixed together; where then this gives a light-blue color, like the flash of fire; where it hath a form as a ruby mixed with crystal in one substance, or as yellow, white, red and blue, mingled in a dark water; where it is as blue in green, yet each hath its lustre and shines. And the water checks the fire, so that there is no consuming there, but an eternal essence or substance in two mysteries united one in another, and yet the distinction of two principles as two kinds of life."

This may be mysterious enough to a reader who has no knowledge whatever concerning the subtler manifestations of the Life-power. Yet the colors mentioned are precisely those we find in Hindu books dealing with the Tattvas, or subtle principles behind the grosser forms of sense-perception which make up our awareness of the physical universe.

There is the mixture of red and white, or "ruby mixed with crystal in one substance."



This we come upon again and again in the yogic descriptions of Prana. There is yellow, which yogis call the color of the Prithivi Tattva; white, which they associate with the Apas Tattva; red, which they assign to the Tejas or Agni Tattva; blue, the color they give to the Vayu Tattva; and the dark water, a deep bluish-green, which corresponds exactly to certain descriptions of what Hindus call the mixing bowl of the elements, or Akasha, wherein the other Tattvas are mingled.

All these colors are mentioned in Rama Prasad's book, NATURE'S FINER FORCES. They are spoken of also in Arthur Avalon's SERPENT POWER. The latter, however, is a work to be read with caution, because it is full of blunders, such as the list of colors of the Tattvas on page 143, which ascribes white to Akasha and "smoky" to Vayu. But the same list also attributes white to Apas, so that if we understand "smoky" to mean "bluish," the same colors are mentioned as those given by Jacob Boehme.

The point is that alchemists and yogis are speaking of something they have seen for themselves. They agree because they know the same fundamental realities, see the same things.

We do not know just when the earlier Upanishads were first put into writing, but it is generally agreed that they antedate, by several centuries, the Buddhistic period which began in the sixth century, B.C. Furthermore, we know that Indian literature was transmitted orally for a long time before it was written. Out of the distant past, then, we hear the voice of a Hindu wise man saying:

"As below so above, as above so below; he passes from death to death who finds here the least shadow of variety. There is no variety in THAT. It should be grasped by the mind alone. He, indeed, passes from death to death who finds here the least shadow of variety."

That the doctrines of alchemy were known in India long ago we learn from Swami Vivekananda, who writes:

"There was the sect called the Rasayanas. Their idea was that ideality, knowledge, spirituality and religion were all very right, but that the body was only an instrument by which to attain to all these. If the body broke now and then it would take so much more time to attain the goal. For instance, a man wants to practice Yoga, or wants to become spiritual. Before he has advanced very far he dies. Then he takes another body and begins again, then dies, and so on, and in this way much time will be lost in dying and being born again. If the body could be made strong and perfect we should have more time to become spiritual. So these Rasayanas say, first make the body very strong, and they claim that this body can be made immortal. Their idea is that if the mind is manufacturing the body, and if it be true that each mind is only one particular outlet to that infinite energy, and that there is no limit to each particular outlet getting any amount of power, why is it impossible that we should keep our bodies all the time? We shall have to manufacture all the bodies we shall ever have. As soon as this body dies we shall have to manufacture another. If we can do that, why cannot we do that just here and now, without getting out? The theory is perfectly correct. If it is possible that we live after death, and make other bodies, why is it impossible that we should have the power of



making bodies here, without entirely dissolving this body, simply changing it continually? They also thought that in mercury and sulphur was hidden the most wonderful power, and that by certain preparations of these a man could keep his body as long as he liked."

--Raja Yoga, pages 207 - 208

In 1879, Dr. William A. P. Martin, who had been a missionary in China, published an article in the CHINA REVIEW offering evidence that alchemy was known and practiced in China at least three centuries before the Christian Era. He believed China to be the source of the alchemical doctrine, which passed thence to Byzantium and Alexandria, and so entered Europe. Dr. Martin cited many ancient texts to show the following points of similarity between Chinese alchemical literature and books written by Western adepts:

(1) The doctrine that there is a seed of metals; (2) the idea that all things contain an active principle whereby they may attain to a condition of higher development; (3) the fact that alchemy was perpetuated in China by oral tradition, supplemented by books written in figurative language; (4) the fact that in China, as in Europe, alchemy is inseparable from magic and astrology; (5) the combination of the idea of transmuting metals with that of making a universal medicine; (6) the estimation of the secret of making gold as being inferior to that of the Elixir of Life; (7) the inculcation of self-culture and self-discipline as being required for success in the work; (8) the concealment of the true matters of the work by names which were also used in the West, including lead, sulphur, mercury and cinnabar; (9) the doctrine that all metals are composite; (10) the presence in Chinese texts of the same symbolic terms which appear in the books of Western alchemists--such as, the "Radical Principle," the "Green Dragon," the "True Mercury," and so on; (11) the fact that there were two Alchemical processes, the first inward and spiritual, the second outward and material, resulting in the production of two elixirs, a greater and a lesser.

This account of Dr. Martin's essay is condensed from A. E. Waite's SECRET TRADITION IN ALCHEMY. Dr. Waite does what he can to minimize the importance of this evidence that the Chinese worked at alchemy before it was known in the Western world, because it conflicts with Dr. Waite's endeavor to show that the greater part of Western alchemical writings were written by deluded men who had no other object than the satisfaction of a sordid lust for gold and the attainment of physical immortality. We find ourselves often in conflict with Dr. Waite's opinions, but we gladly acknowledge his merits as an indefatigable and successful miner for all sorts of information on esoteric subjects. Not the least of the treasures he has rescued from obscurity is this essay of Dr. Martin's.

In our next lesson we shall consider some of the clues to the enigmatic writings of the Western alchemists, the better to prepare you to follow the explanations of their cryptic doctrine, which will be considered at length as we proceed with this course.



## THE GREAT WORK

### Lesson Two

Western alchemy may be traced to the days when Alexandria was a meeting-place for that group of members of the Inner School who later transferred their activities to Fez, and from the latter city issued the earliest versions of Tarot. Alchemical philosophy is tinged with ideas brought to Alexandria by wandering teachers from India, Persia and China. This accounts for the mixture of Hindu thought, Egyptian magic, and Greek philosophy in the Hermetic teaching veiled by the symbolism of alchemy and Tarot.

Besides these, there is the unmistakable influence of Hebrew esoteric tradition. This is mentioned by Zozimus, one of the early Greek alchemists, who says:

"There are two sciences and two wisdoms--one of the Egyptians and one of the Hebrews, the latter being rendered more solid by Divine Justice. Science and wisdom at their best rule over lower sciences and inferior wisdoms: they come down from remote ages. Their generation seeks nothing from material and corruptible bodies: it operates apart from foreign intervention, sustained by prayer and grace."

Yet the writings of Zozimus and other alchemists of his period abound in recipes for making the baser metals appear to be gold and silver. These recipes are the same as those in the Leyden Papyrus, which is a perfectly frank account of various devices for giving a false appearance of gold and silver to such metals as lead, copper and tin. From this the French writer, Berthelot, argues that alchemy began as fraud, and somehow the alchemists departed from this straightforward, if somewhat dishonest beginning, and began to dream of transmutation and philosophize upon it. Dr. Waite appears to embrace this view, perhaps with some reserves.

The truth is this: The sages do not lie, but often they do give recipes for the sort of false tingeing we have described. He who tries out the recipes will get results of a sort, but not of the sort which is the true concern of the Great Work. In alchemical books of the earlier period, the sophistications of the false tingers were the blinds for the true work. He who knows how to read the books knows how to separate the subtle from the gross, the wheat of wisdom from the chaff of chemical recipes.

Zozimus puts us on the track of the means to effect this separation when he speaks of the superiority of the Hebrew wisdom. Long after him came Paracelsus, who wrote:

"If you do not understand the use of the Cabalists and the old astronomers, you are not born by God for the Spagyric art, or chosen by Nature for the work of Vulcan, or created to open your mouth concerning Alchemical Arts."

These words from the second chapter of his TINCTURE OF THE PHILOSOPHERS make it perfectly clear that, from the very beginning of Western alchemy to the day of one of its greatest European adepts, the tradition was continued that the esoteric doctrine of Israel includes the most important keys to the secret of the Great Art.

Yet there is only one treatise on alchemy which is definitely part of Qabalistic literature. This is a diffused, confused volume, not altogether without merit, but by no means one of the more important alchemical texts. It is named CLEANSING FIRE, and con-



sists of fragments scattered through the first volume of Knorr von Rosenroth's KABA-LAH DENU DATA. In 1714 these were collected and translated into English by an unknown student who called himself "The Lover of Philalethes." It was reprinted, with preface, notes and explanations, by "Sapere Aude," (Dr. W. Wynn Westcott), in 1894.

If we consider what Paracelsus means by "the use of the Cabalists," we shall have little difficulty in understanding why there are so few Qabalistic treatises on alchemy. The Holy Qabalah is a method for discovering the hidden spiritual meaning of the Bible. The subject matter of the Qabalah is primarily the secret doctrine behind the letter of the Pentateuch.

Hence "the use of the Cabalists" is the method whereby the inner significance of the Scriptures of Israel is revealed. This method is based on correlations between numbers, letters and words.

Dr. Waite and many others dismiss this number-letter system, called Gematria, as being of no real value. The fact remains that the mystical theses of the Qabalah are developments of material worked out from the text of the Hebrew Scriptures by Gematria, Notariqon, and other procedures constituting what is known as the Literal Qabalah. This is made evident from beginning to end of the ZOHAR, now available in an excellent English translation, published by the Soncino Press.

Gematria is in disrepute because it has been abused. By perverting it, one may make any writing whatever yield any meaning one wishes to extract from it, and fanatics and charlatans have so misused the Literal Qabalah again and again.

Yet the fact remains that the same methods, employed with due discretion and discrimination, do give us keys to the true import of many passages in the Old Testament. More than this, there is not one of the philosophical theses so admired by writers like Dr. Waite, who dismisses Gematria altogether, which is not, as we have said, a development of material drawn from the Bible by this very method. It is as if one should profess admiration for gold, and at the same time declare the utter worthlessness of mining tools, when one proclaims the mystic value of Qabalistic intuition, and at the same time despises the methods by which the materials on which that intuition is exercised were gathered.

A more intelligent approach to Gematria has been made by Frederick Bligh Bond and Dr. Thomas Simcox Lea, whose works, though devoted to a study of the Greek Gematria in the New Testament, and in the Coptic Gnostic books, are full of valuable suggestions for the student of alchemy. They say:

"About the fifth century B. C. there began to appear in the Syro-Phoenician center east of the Mediterranean traces of a mode of writing in which the letters of the alphabet serve also the purpose of numerals. Though coming from this centre, the origin of the method is not believed to be Phoenician but to be traceable to a more Eastern source. From this parent influence two systems are derived. These are the Greek and the Hebrew. Both systems attained a high degree of development about the third century B. C. Both languages are constructed with great skill, and are evidently the work of highly in-



structed men animated by a clear purpose. Though compiled from older and far less perfect material, they represent something far more than the natural evolution of that material. They shew system, but they also shew peculiarities, sometimes having the appearance of intention, for which no adequate reason has yet been offered. Their alphabets, which are also numerals, exhibit unexplained features, some of which may be described as mysterious. It is scarcely reasonable to suppose that the element of chance has in any appreciable degree entered into their framing. And this is the more unlikely in that there is evidence of a contrary belief among these peoples who shewed a peculiar reverence for their alphabets, ascribing to each letter its own mystical value, and, to the whole, a body of symbolic teaching in which the principles of Number, Sound, and also Form as connected with each letter, all played their part."

(Preliminary Investigation, pp. 5 - 6)

In THE APOSTOLIC GNOSIS, vol. 1, pp. 22-23, they write: "... We make a very limited use of Roman letters as numbers, but for all ordinary purposes, the Arabic numerals which we employ are used for calculation only and are not associated in our thoughts with words or letters in our language.

"But if we had been trained as children to add, to subtract, to multiply and divide by means of the letters of our alphabet, how differently should we regard that alphabet. Instinct, habit, association of long standing would form an inevitable and indissoluble link between the letter and the number. The letters of a word would appear to us as a number, and the digits of a number would suggest a word.

"And so it was at the commencement of our era, before the introduction of the Arabic numerals. And with the Greeks, this association of letter and number was of the most intimate nature. The coining of words for the representations of preferences in number commenced very early and much of the tradition is associated with the Pythagorean schools in which the numbers are often recognizable as conventional symbols of ratio. Terms used in music, and in astronomy and chronometry betray a like influence, and those names of divinities which are symbols of planetary times and seasons can often be identified by their 'Gematria' of number . . . More than all else, the notion of number-symbolism enters into and colors religious nomenclature. And we have abundant proof from the Fathers of the church that the earliest symbolism of God the Father was of a geometrical nature."

Alchemy employs the same system, and the main reason there are so few books on alchemy written in Hebrew is that the great texts are in the Bible itself. Nor are they those of the Old Testament only. The Hermetic doctrine permeates the sacred literature of Christianity just as certainly as it runs like a golden thread through the tapestry, strange and often outwardly repellent, of the Hebrew Scriptures. We must never forget that, after all, the New Testament is not less distinctly Hebrew than the rest of the Bible. It disguises itself a little in its Greek garb, but throughout the Gospels, the Acts, the Epistles and the Book of Revelation, the thought is Hebraic, even though the words are Greek.

We find ourselves unable to accept the idea that the New Testament is a fragmentary



corruption of a Wisdom Teaching now lost. Nor is it possible for one who has sufficient knowledge of Semitic turns of thought to draw any other conclusion from a perusal of the New Testament in the original than that those books are a Hellenized presentation of ideas essentially Hebrew in their immediate origins, however much indebted to older forms of Ageless Wisdom the Hebrew thought itself may be.

On the other hand, many currents of doctrine flow together to make the mighty stream of wisdom presented in the New Testament. The ideas are predominantly, but by no means exclusively, Semitic. The New Testament is all of a piece with the Old, but this is far from saying that the Bible is not full of doctrine which is more ancient than what appears from the surface, literal reading of the text. Egypt and Chaldea and Persia and India, perhaps China also, have had their share in making this library of Ageless Wisdom. Once we know how to penetrate behind the outer veil of words and symbols, we find ourselves in the presence of the same mysteries which are the subject matter of all sacred books.

Thus it is that the anonymous authors of the Rosicrucian manifestoes, after plainly intimating that their doctrine is a mixture of Hermeticism and Qabalah, assert that it is also definitely Christian, and that the Bible agrees with it on all points. From this, and from certain writings of the later alchemists, it was inferred by the ingenious author of Remarks upon Alchemy and the Alchemists, General Ethan Allen Hitchcock, that the real object of the Great Work was no more than moral perfection, and that the complicated symbolism of the true sages was adopted to avoid religious persecution. Those who see alchemy in this light are of the opinion that the Hermetic Art is merely a system of spiritual discipline, leading to illumination and regeneration.

Others, like Mrs. Atwood, whose SUGGESTIVE INQUIRY is eminently worth reading, advance the view that the Great Work is a psychological process akin to mesmerism, in which the subject of the work is a sensitive who is trained by the operator so as to become clairvoyant.

Neither of these notions is correct, but neither is wholly false. Moral discipline is certainly part of the self-training of every alchemist, and that training includes also the application of laws and forces which were made known to the world by the discoveries of Mesmer, Braid, and their successors. The Great Work, however, is more than self-discipline, more than the exaltation of human consciousness into a state of mystic vision, and very much more than the manipulation of "ectoplasm" which one American framer of alchemical theories offered not long since as the "true" meaning of the alchemical books.

The Great Work is a physical work. It does actually operate on physical substances contained in the bowels of the earth. Here habit has made us speak in approved Hermetic fashion, yet, though there is more in what has just been said than will be discerned by some readers, we hasten to add that the substances an alchemist works with are actually found in their natural state as forms of the physical matter which constitutes the structure of this planet.

The laboratory of an alchemist, however, is a hidden laboratory. In the books of genuine adepts, the vessels of the art are invariably called "secret." So are the pro-



cesses. Thus Bernard of Trevisan writes: "Dissolution is the whole mystery of the art, and is to be accomplished, not as some have thought, by means of fire, but in a wholly abstruse manner, by the help of Mercury." In this quotation, the adjective "abstruse" has the now obsolete meaning: "concealed, hidden."

Thomas Charnock gives a hint to the same effect in his BREVIARY: "I think few pot-  
ters in this realm have at any time made such cunning ware, as for our science we fashion and prepare." Few, indeed, for all that alchemical books abound in pictures of alembics, retorts, and all manner of strange-looking vessels; because in truth, until the Stone is made the only laboratory is the alchemist's own body, and the secret vessels are organs of that body. Alchemy is primarily an interior operation.

Yet by no means is it wholly metaphysical. Actual physical materials are worked upon, and the operation has for its object the making of a mineral product, which may truly be called a stone. This Stone is a product of art though the materials composing it are drawn from nature. The Great Work may be described correctly as being a psycho-physiological transformation, called Hermetic because it is directed by human self-consciousness.

As all readers of these pages have learned in the course of their Tarot studies, self-consciousness was personified by the Egyptians as Thoth, by the Greeks as Hermes, and by the Romans as Mercury. Thus it becomes evident that what Bernard of Trevisan means by saying the work is performed by the help of Mercury is practically what the Hindu sage we quoted in Lesson 1 had in mind when he said: "It should be grasped by the mind alone."

Dissolution is said to be the whole mystery of alchemy because the Great Work enables us to control those functions of our bodies which dissolve or break down into their constituent elements, the forms of materials taken from our environment. The secret vessels of the alchemist are organs of his own body, together with their etheric and astral counterparts.

The Great Work, then, is really a chemical operation, performed under the direction of man's self-conscious intelligence. It begins in man's mind, but it is realized by means of changes effected in his physical body. In consequence of these changes, he becomes a new creature, able to exercise powers which are unknown to the average human being.

When an alchemist, working in his secret laboratory, has dissolved the old creature and coagulated the new creature in its place, his physical organism enables him to effect, by means purely mental, transformations in the molecular and atomic structure of the physical substances constituting his environment. Because of the change in himself, and the power it places at his disposal, he really can manufacture a physical substance which has remarkable healing properties and which may be employed for the transmutation of the baser metals into actual gold and silver.

His ability to do this, however, is never abused. But to suppose that such metallic transmutation is the main object of the Great Work is to be grossly mistaken. The Work has a far higher aim.



## THE GREAT WORK

### Lesson Three

The principal piece of alchemical apparatus is a furnace, called an athanor. Eliphas Levi says: "We are all in possession of the chemical instrument, the great and sole athanor which answers for the separation of the subtle from the gross and the fixed from the volatile. This instrument, complete as the world and precise as mathematics, is represented by the sages under the emblem of the pentagram, or five-pointed star, which is the absolute sign of human intelligence. I will follow the example of the wise by forbearing to name it; it is too easy to guess it."

There is no need today for even the slight concealment Levi thought advisable. The athanor is the human organism. Like many other alchemical terms, its name is of Chaldean origin, and comes to us through the Hebrew. It is אֵת הַנּוֹר, Eth Ha-Nour, "Essence of Fire."

Thus Bernard of Trevisan speaks truly when he says the Great Work is not performed by means of fire, and so do other sages tell the truth when they insist that the fire employed by them is no "common fire." It is the essence of fire, manifested as the human body and its finer counterparts, and thus the athanor is defined as "a self-feeding, digesting furnace, in which an equable heat is maintained."

This definition is a perfect description of the body, which feeds itself, digests what it feeds upon, and maintains within itself an even temperature. The reference to feeding and digestion is particularly significant. For the actual basis of the Great Work is directly connected with the processes whereby the physical body is built from food.

Notice that Eliphas Levi gives a plain hint that the athanor is the human body when he says it is "complete as the world," that is, as the "little world," or microcosm. Then he says it is "precise as mathematics," to intimate that the Great Work is a course of training in conscious compliance with laws having their basis in mathematics. Finally, he tells us the athanor is symbolized by the pentagram.

Some reference to this important figure has been made in our other publications, but here we may begin by pointing out that every five-pointed star is a development of the pentagon, or regular polygon having five equal sides. A pentagon is the central figure in every pentagram. Its five equal sides symbolize the balance and equal proportion of five aspects of reality, represented by the five sides.

These five aspects of reality are the five phases of manifestation known in alchemy as the quintessence and the four elements. The fifth essence, or quintessence, corresponds to the ether of space. The four elements are fire, water, air and earth. In the figure of the pentagram, the upper point corresponds to the quintessence, the right lower point is attributed to fire, the right upper point to water, the left upper point to air, and the left lower point to earth.

Each of the five lines of a pentagram is divided in exact extreme and mean proportion. This may be defined as the division of any quantity into two such parts or proportions that the measure of the lesser part bears to the measure of the greater part the



same relation that the measure of the greater part bears to the whole quantity. The occult meaning of this proportion is expressed in the Hermetic axiom: "Nature is to man as man is to God." This axiom is the philosophical basis of the Great Work. It defines man as the greater part (greater in power, though less in mass); nature as the lesser part, because nature is subordinate to man; God as the ALL, or whole, superior to man as man is superior to nature, and bringing nature to full perfection through human agency.

It is true that the alchemist seeks to transmute the baser metals into gold. When he speaks of the seven metals, however, he means something other than the common products of the mine. Thus George Ripley warns his readers, in his COMPOUND OF ALCHYMIE, not to waste time in fruitless experiments with "mean metals digged out of the mine."

Other sages make use of the same distinction, speaking always of our Mercury, our Sulphur, our Gold and Silver, to show they are alluding to something peculiar to the alchemical operation. The alchemical metals bear the names of the sun, the moon, and the five planets known to the old astronomers, and in the older books are almost always designated by these names.

This is one reason Paracelsus insists that one must be acquainted with the ideas of the old astronomers in order to succeed in the Great Work. The astronomical names of the metals are used also in heraldry, as has been shown in our booklet, THE GREAT SEAL OF THE UNITED STATES. The heraldic colors are often used by alchemists, hence it is important to know them. The correspondences are:

LEAD .....	SATURN .....	BLACK
IRON .....	MARS .....	RED
TIN .....	JUPITER .....	BLUE
GOLD .....	SUN .....	YELLOW
COPPER .....	VENUS .....	GREEN
SILVER .....	MOON .....	WHITE
QUICKSILVER .....	MERCURY .....	ORANGE

The colors are those which, in what is called the "Queen Scale," are attributed to the spheres of the planets on the Tree of Life. In TAROT FUNDAMENTALS and TAROT INTERPRETATION, you have learned the correspondences of these to the seven interior stars, which are the same as the seven chakras of the yogis.

You will remember that Saturn corresponds to a nerve-center at the base of the spine, the sacral plexus. Mars is represented in the physical body by the prostatic ganglion. The sun governs the cardiac plexus. Venus is attributed to the pharyngeal plexus. The moon corresponds to the cavernous ganglion, which lies on either side of the sella turcica, the protective covering of the pituitary body. Mercury is represented by the pineal gland.

In that portion of the Great Work which has to do with the transformation of the alchemist himself, the making of the Philosophers' Stone is a process whereby the vibra-



tory activity of these interior stars is so modified that the lower rates of vibration are transmuted (literally "changed across") and sublimated, or lifted up. This transmutation of the subtle force which works through the interior stars has a triple consequence. It leads to spiritual illumination. It gives the perfected adept a new body which is absolutely healthy. It enables him to exercise powers which remain latent in most human beings.

His health is the result of perfect combination and coordination of chemical and electrical energies which maintain the form and functions of his physical body. This condition of radiant vitality is communicable. When it is established, an alchemist can project his own rate of vibration upon the bodies of other persons, inducing a vibration like that of his own organs. This is one method of Hermetic healing.

His mental and spiritual vibration is also communicable. By projecting his own state of consciousness on the mind of another, he can raise the level of that person's consciousness so that it approximates his own. Of such spiritual contagion, the Bible, and the sacred writings of other religions, afford many notable examples.

When this is done, an actual force is projected. This is the alchemical "powder of projection," by means of which "base metals," deluded, ignorant men and women, may be transmuted into "gold," enlightened, liberated personalities.

George Ripley warns against misuse of this powder. He says the metals on which projection is made must first be properly cleansed.

What he means is obvious when we understand the figurative language. The work of projection refers to the transmutation of the minds and bodies of an adept's disciples. By it an unwritten and unspoken something passes from the mind of him who knows to the minds of those he instructs. The pupil is the metal to be transmuted, and the metal must be cleansed. That is, the mind of the pupil, and his body also, must be purified before the higher secrets of the art are communicated. These are never committed to writing, nor can they be told by means of ordinary speech. The knowledge is beyond the limits of exoteric verbal expression.

Alchemy aims at a state of consciousness which is reflected into the physical plane as perfect vibratory equilibrium. This equilibrium already exists in nature, and it is the business of an alchemist to manifest it through his personality. Thus we are told that equilibrium is the basis of the Great Work, and all Hermetic books admonish us to imitate nature.

The perfectly balanced state of personality is the "new mind" of the injunction: "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." It is a new understanding of life, founded on a new type of experience.

A prominent characteristic of this experience is that it is permeated with the quality of eternity, hinted at in the Rosicrucian inquiry: "Were it not an excellent thing to live always so as if you had lived from the beginning of the world, and should still live to the end thereof?" Such a state of consciousness is attainable, and that long before perfect adeptship is reached. One of the earliest fruits of the practice of the Great Work is an



inner certainty of immortality which ripens later into definite knowledge, beyond the power of words to express or communicate.

Yet alchemy is not exclusively concerned with consciousness. What is aimed at in the performance of the Great Work is more than a state of mind, more than a philosophical or metaphysical realization. In saying the Great Work unfolds a new kind of consciousness, we mean you to understand that he in whom this unfoldment occurs is thereby enabled to exercise all the powers that go with it.

He does actually find himself able to command the "spirits of the elements," the subtle forces whose interplay produces the various appearances of the physical world. This command enables him to transform his corruptible physical body into a body incorruptible. By the same mastery, he controls conditions. He can alter the appearance of things round him, and even change their atomic structure, by raising or lowering their rates of vibration. It is by such control that he performs the secondary operation which enables him to make an actual physical substance which may be employed, even by persons who are not themselves adepts, to transmute metals and heal diseases.

Nevertheless, man himself is the primary subject of the Great Art. It is useless to try to make the Philosophers' Stone outside oneself before one has completed the first part of the operation, which makes the operator himself the Living Stone.

Thus it sometimes happens that diligent, intuitive students learn from the books what materials are employed for the secondary operation, and what physical process is followed in making the external Stone. Yet something always goes wrong with their attempts. This is inevitable. There is wanting to the perfection of their work the power we have just described. One must be the Stone before one may make it.

No secret formula can enable us to control the subtle forces of nature unless we begin by controlling them within ourselves. Our minds must be changed, so that we may perceive and understand things hidden from the uninitiated. Our bodies must be transmuted, because they constitute the Vase of Art in which the whole operation is performed. In their natural state they cannot receive and specialize the high-tension currents of the essence of fire, which would destroy the physical organism of an average person.

Alchemy, then, is the Western version of what Hindus call yoga. This is indicated by various points of identity between the two systems of philosophy and practice.

Obviously, the alchemical metals are the same as the chakras of the yogis. We have noticed also the remarkable similarity of ideas and language in THE EMERALD TABLET and in a passage from the KATHA UPANISHAD. These are by no means the only close resemblances.

Fundamental in alchemy is the doctrine that all things whatsoever are manifestations of three principles: Sulphur, Mercury and Salt. They are not the common physical substances. Their names indicate three ways in which the One Thing manifests itself. One is identified by a quality like a quality possessed by Sulphur. Another has characteristics like those of Quicksilver. The third has properties resembling those of Salt.



Sulphur, or brimstone, burns easily and has choking fumes. For centuries it has been associated with the fires of hell and with the seething passions those fires typify. Mercury is liquid and flowing, and the surface of each globule of this metal is a mirror reflecting its environment. Its rapid movement, like that of a living creature, accounts for the name Quicksilver, in which "quick" means both living and rapid, as we may see from the French argent vive, "living silver." Salt crystallizes in perfect cubes, and, since the days of Pythagoras, cubes have been types of earth and the physical plane. Salt has also the property of arresting dissolution or disintegrative chemical change. The quality of Sulphur, then, is fiery and passionate. That of Mercury is vital and reflective. That of Salt is arrestive and binding.

Compare these alchemical doctrines with the yoga teaching. The yogis affirm the existence of three gunas, or qualities, entering into the composition of all things. Wherever there is a form, there are the three qualities. Their names are Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.

In the fourteenth chapter of THE BHAGAVAD-GITA their characteristics are fully described. There we read that Rajas is the embodiment of desire, and the producer of thirst and relish; that it ties the ego through attachment to action; that from it are born greed, initiation of action, energy in great worldly achievements, unrest and thirst. The same chapter says the quality of Sattva is illuminative; that it is transparent, or light-transmitting; that it ties the ego through attachment to happiness and knowledge; that when it is dominant there is the illumination of knowledge at every gate of the body, and thus the senses and faculties attain the fullest manifestation of power. As to the quality of Tamas, we are told that it is born of insensibility; that it ties up the ego by means of heedlessness, laziness and sleep; that it veils the power of discrimination, and is the cause of spiritual blindness. We may represent these three qualities by three English words: Desire (Rajas); Intelligence (Sattva); Inertia (Tamas). The same three words might be used in place of the names of the alchemical principles, Sulphur, Mercury and Salt.

Again, alchemists recognize five phases of manifestation, or five classes of expression for the One Thing. The first of these is the quintessence, or fifth essence, so named because it is a fifth thing, extracted by the alchemical operation from the four elements. Yet alchemists agree that the quintessence is also the root or source of the four elements: fire, water, air and earth.

Their teaching is the same as that of the yogis, who call the five classes of expression Tattvas. The Tattvas are: Akasha (quintessence); Tejas or Agni (fire); Apas (water); Vayu (air); Prithivi (earth). Furthermore, yoga philosophy states that the five Tattvas are subtle principles of sensation; that every Tattva has its own peculiar property; and that there is a cyclic ebb and flow of the Tattvas, in regular sequence, through all things and creatures.

Yoga practice aims to control this cyclic flow of the Tattvas. Similarly, in alchemy we hear of a wheel of the elements, with the quintessence at the center. This is illustrated by Key 10 of Tarot. Concerning the work this Key symbolizes, Ripley, in his COMPOUND OF ALCHYMIE, writes:



But first of these elements make thou rotation,  
 And into Water thy Earth turn first of all;  
 Then of thy Water make Air by levigation;  
 And Air make Fire; then MASTER will I thee call  
 Of all our secrets, great and small;  
 The Wheel of the Elements thou canst turn about,  
 Truly conceiving our writings without doubt.

Levigation is a term used in alchemy to indicate various processes for making a substance smooth, free from grit, or impalpable, like a very fine powder. Here, Ripley intends it to represent the work which transforms alchemical "water" into alchemical "air," so that it becomes invisible and intangible.

Triple is my flame in manifestation,  
     And one in essence.  
     Three tongues of Fire,  
     Three manifesting Words,  
 And One Being whence all come forth.  
     One Archetypal world,  
     One creative letter,  
 And three worlds derived therefrom.  
 Such is the manifestation of the sacred Fire.

This is the Fire of formation,  
 And by this Fire is atonement made.

    This Fire is hidden  
 In the depths of the waters  
     Of the Great Sea,  
     For in the Root of Waters  
 Is concealed the Fire of the Father.

Behold, this is the Fire of the Breath of the  
     Mighty Ones,  
 And it appeareth as a flame of separation.

This living Flame is the power of the Anointed One,  
 The Power of the mighty thunders of the swift flash  
     Which divideth the One into the Two,  
     And in its return  
 Absorbeth the Two into the perfect Unity.

(From the BOOK OF TOKENS by Dr. Paul Foster Case.)



## THE GREAT WORK

### Lesson Four

Preparation for the practice of alchemy is, in all essentials, the same as preparation for the practice of yoga. It is, first of all, a moral or ethical preparation. Evil tendencies are to be overcome, and positive virtues developed. The gross functions of the body are to be purified. Then comes the finer purification of interior centers. The object of these yoga practices is precisely what is mentioned by Basil Valentine in THE TRIUMPHAL CHARIOT OF ANTIMONY, when he instructs his readers how to prepare for the Great Work.

"Invocation of God," says he, "with a certain heavenly intention, drawn from the depths of sincere heart and conscience, liberated from ambition, hypocrisy and all other vices which are in affinity with these, including arrogance, luxury, boldness, petulance, oppression of the poor, and similar evils. All of these are to be eradicated from the heart, that when a man desires to prostrate himself before the Throne of Grace, in order to obtain health, he may do so with a conscience free from unprofitable weeds, so that his body may be transmuted into a holy temple of God and purged from all uncleanness."

This is exactly what we find in descriptions of the preliminary practices of yoga. Observe that the objective is not wealth, but health. That is, wholeness or completeness.

Basil Valentine is supposed to have been a monk of the Benedictine Order, and he may well have understood that health in the sense of completeness is the exact meaning of the Hebrew noun שלום, Shalom, which has special mystical significance in Qabalah. At any rate, he is perfectly clear as to what it is that is to be transmuted, and his choice of this peculiarly alchemical verb cannot be lightly passed over. If words have any meaning whatever, Basil Valentine tells us here that the object of the Great Work is the transmutation of the alchemist's body, and the initial step to this end a "certain heavenly intention," that is, a reaching inward to heaven.

Any yogi would understand what he means his readers to gather from these words. Furthermore, yoga practice aims to do another thing which alchemists endeavor to accomplish. The fire of alchemy is said to be a secret fire, which is often compared to a serpent or a dragon. In yoga practice, likewise, the active principle of the operation is said to be a fiery force, coiled in the Saturn center at the base of the spine. It is named Kundalini, the coiled serpent-power.

Yoga practice raises this serpent power, stage by stage, through the seven chakras we have identified with the metals. The practice is therefore really a practice of sublimation, which lifts up and brings into active manifestation the hidden powers of the subconscious life of man. Yoga calls forth the powers of the "underworld," whose ruler, the Egyptians believed, was Osiris. Alchemy does the same.

Furthermore, Paracelsus, like the rest of the sages, declares that the Great Work is performed by the aid of Mercury, and that the only other agencies of the art are the powers of the sun and moon. In like manner the yoga system recognizes the primary



importance of the power personified by the god Mercury, for, as the UPANISHAD tells us, the object of yoga is something which is to be grasped by the mind alone. Yogis recognize also two other agencies. One, hot and fiery, they call Prana or Surya, Surya meaning "sun." The other agency, cold and moist, is named Rayi, and is always termed the lunar current.

The points of correspondence between yoga and alchemy are therefore these:

1. Both systems agree that all things are expressions of one fundamental energy.
2. Both affirm that all things combine three qualities: a. Wisdom, Sattva, or Mercury; b. Desire, Rajas, or Sulphur; c. Inertia, Tamas, or Salt.
3. Both recognize five modes of expression: Akasha, Spirit, or the quintessence; Tejas or Agni, fire; Apas, water; Vayu, air; Prithivi, earth.
4. Both systems mention seven principal vehicles of activity, called chakras by yogis, and metals by alchemists.
5. Both say there is a secret force, fiery in quality, which is to be raised from one chakra or metal to another, until the power of all seven is sublimated in the highest.
6. Yoga says Prana or Surya, sun, Rayi, moon, and Sattva, wisdom, are the three main agencies in the work. Alchemy says the whole operation is a work of the sun and moon, aided by Mercury.
7. In both systems, preparation for the work is the establishment of physical purity and ethical freedom from lust, avarice, and other anti-social tendencies.
8. According to both systems, success enables adepts to exercise extraordinary powers, to heal all diseases, and to control all the forces of nature so as to exert a determining influence on circumstance.

The basis of alchemy, like the basis of yoga, is the idea that man is a direct consequence of the perfectly free, unmodified Spirit whence all things proceed. This is the true essence of his being. The Great Work is the direction of energy derived from that essence according to the perceptions of an awakened intelligence.

The intelligence which aids this work is the self-consciousness of man, which, though not the highest level of life-expression, has this power: it can perceive the true order of nature by discerning the principles behind the veil of surface appearances.

In its ability to discover principles, and in its power to control by suggestion the forces of the subconscious life, self-consciousness combines the two greatest potencies known to us. By the recognition of the principles on which the human body and the things in its environment are constructed, the intelligence of man is able to invent and carry into execution novel applications of these principles not provided by nature apart from the intervention of human self-consciousness. Thus man is able to bring about a finer adjustment and a better organization, not only of his environment, but also of his own personal organism.



The result of so doing is the production of a new kind of human being, capable of receiving the influx of forms of energy which would disintegrate an ordinary human body, and able to express modes of consciousness quite unknown to the greater number of men and women.

The alchemist himself is the subject of the primary operation of the Great Work. His laboratory is his own personality. The secret vessels of that laboratory are organs of his own body. His practice enables him to demonstrate that his personality is a field for the operation of the Sun. Step by step, it gently and gradually alters his mind and body until he reaches the stage of illumination wherein he perceives directly the truth that he is living the eternal life of the One Power which brings all things into manifestation, and sustains and governs everything in the universe.

At the completion of the Great Work, the alchemist has so transmuted his personality that he expresses nothing but the inwardly perceived impulses of the One Power. Whatever he thinks, says or does, he knows to be a direct expression of the One Will.

He does not believe this. He knows it; and he knows it whether his contemporaries understand him or not. As a rule, he is very discreet, and is careful to make no profession of adeptship, often concealing his true status from even his closest friends and relatives.

For adeptship is a way of being and a way of living, incomprehensible to persons who are not themselves adepts. An adept knows the true significance of even the tiniest details of his daily life, and in all things acts as an administrator of the eternal laws of Being for the furtherance of the Great Plan.

To this high goal direct your aspiration. It may seem far beyond you now. Yet the Wisdom of the Ages proclaims that whosoever will persist in the Great Work, carrying it out stage by stage, will certainly complete it.

"This completion is the 'Confection of the Philosophers' Stone.'" The verb "confect" means to compose from various ingredients, and thus the confection of the Stone means for alchemists the composition of something by art.

"Bellows alchemists," charlatans, and those deluded by the cryptic writings of true sages into the false belief that the Work is a physical operation, performed in an external laboratory, suppose the Stone to be a physical object.

What true alchemists have in mind is to be gathered from the writings of one of the best among them, Jacob Boehme. He was not, as many have erroneously supposed, merely a mystic yielding to the spirit of his age in his use of alchemical terms. He was a real alchemist, as truly a member of the great company of sages as any other whom we shall quote in these pages. Thus what he has to say about the Philosophers' Stone deserves our most careful consideration. The following quotations are taken from his THREEFOLD LIFE OF MAN.

"The old Adamical flesh of death cometh not to the heavenly flesh: No, it belongeth to the earth, to death; but the eternal flesh is hidden in the old earthly man, and it is in



the old man, as the fire in iron, or as the gold in the dark stone. This is the noble stone, (Lapis Philosophorum), the Philosophers' Stone, which the Magi find, which tinctureth nature, and generateth a new son in the old. He who findeth that, esteemeth more highly of it than of this outward world. . .

"He who hath it, and knoweth it, if he seeketh, he may find all things whatsoever are in heaven and in earth. It is the Stone which is rejected of the builders, and is the chief corner stone; upon whatsoever it falleth, it grindeth to powder, and kindleth a fire therein. All universities seek it, but find it not by their seeking; sometimes it is found by one that seeketh it rightly. But others (that seek it in self, and for their own gain) despise it and cast it away, and so it remaineth hidden still."

Here it may be noted that in Hebrew, "the stone which the builders refused" is אבן סאסו הכוּנים, ehben masu ha-bonaim, and that by the numerical correspondences of words, this phrase is equivalent to אור ננוז, aur genoz, the Hidden Light, and to חורם אביו, Khurum Abiv, or Hiram Abiff, the name of the central figure in the legend of Freemasonry.

Jacob Boehme says further: "In this Stone there lieth hidden, whatsoever God and the eternity, also heaven, the stars, and elements contain, and are able to do: There never was from eternity anything better or more precious than this, and it is offered by God, and bestowed upon man; every one may have it that doth desire it; it is in a simple form, and hath the power of the whole Deity in it."

In various places in our lessons on Tarot, in THE TREE OF LIFE, and in THE MASTER PATTERN, you have found references to this same Stone under its usual Qabalistic title, אבן, Ehben. There you have been told that the Stone represents the union of the central Ego in man, Qabalistically termed בן, Ben, the Son, with the cosmic Life-power seated in the second Sephirah, which power is designated אב, Ab, the Father.

Boehme speaks of "finding" this Stone, but he also, like all true alchemists, teaches his readers that the "finding" is also a "making," or a "confection." In one sense, to be sure, the true Stone already exists within each of us but only in its elements. These must be discovered, and then brought into the perfect union suggested by the presence of the two words, אב, Ab, and בן, Ben, in אבן, Ehben, Stone.

The initial stage of the work is known to alchemists as "the discovery of the First Matter," and to this discovery the next eight lessons of this series will be devoted.



# THE GREAT WORK

## Lesson Five

### THE FIRST MATTER 1

The adepts of alchemy agree that success in the Great Work depends on the discovery of the First Matter. Here we must be careful. As years pass, words change in meaning, and we shall go astray if we suppose "to discover," in alchemy, is exactly the same as "to find." We must go back to older meanings of the very "discover," even back to the Hebrew verb translated "discover" in the Authorized Version of the Old Testament.

This verb is גלה, galah, and its primary signification is "to lay bare, to denude, to strip of concealment." Thus in Amos 3:7 we find the words גלה סודו, galah sodo, "he revealeth his secret," written of God's revelation of His purposes to prophets. Another meaning of this verb is "to open a book." In this connection, note that the first letter of the word is ג, Gimel, which is attributed to the High Priestess of Tarot, who holds an open book or scroll.

Continuing with our use of Tarot to help us understand this verb, we see that the second letter is ל, Lamed, represented by Key 11, which has equilibrium for its basic meaning. The last letter is ה, Heh, in Tarot the Emperor, symbol of reason, and of dominion over the conditions of physical existence.

Since the first letter of גלה is associated with memory, we may understand that in order to denude the First Matter of its veil of concealment we must employ the power of recollection and association represented by the High Priestess. The High Priestess, moreover, is herself a symbol of the First Matter. The discovery of the First Matter is direct perception of what she stands for. It is not the term of a quest prosecuted in the world around us. It is rather the unveiling of the true nature of something within us. This unveiling is the result of an act of recollection.

The secret of the First Matter is hidden deep in subconsciousness. To bring it to the surface is the first step in the Great Work, as it is the first step in yoga. Thus the letter ל, Lamed, as a symbol of that true faith which takes form in persevering action, enters into the composition of the verb גלה.

Without faith in the actual existence of the Matter, we shall never discover it. If we share the world's opinion that alchemy is nonsense, and alchemists either fools or knaves, we can never participate in the knowledge of those who have discovered the First Matter. For we must have confidence in order to persist through the preliminary stages of the work, continuing our practice day in and day out through the period of test and trial in which no outward and visible signs of success attend our efforts.

Hence the final letter of גלה reminds us that the discovery is to be made with the mind alone. This is what we learned from the Katha Upanishad. In its initial stages, the Great Work is a rational process, and our earliest glimpses of the First Matter are caught by the eyes of the mind, in the light of reason.

To prepare ourselves, we begin with the words of the sages. Over and over again, their books describe the First Matter; but for beginners the descriptions seem to be a



mass of meaningless verbiage. As one persists in attending again and again to what they say, the inner significance of the words begins to show, like the outline of a figure covered by drapery. Then, as we compare the descriptions, we are able to reason out what the First Matter must be.

The actual discovery, however, is by no means an inference. There is no guess-work about it. When you discover the First Matter, you know you have done so. From then on, nobody can argue you out of your knowledge. It isn't opinion. It isn't merely what you think or suppose. You share the experience of the sages. Everything they have written concerning the First Matter becomes clear to you.

Then you understand why no adept ever tells outright what the First Matter really is. You realize that the secret simply cannot be told because it is knowledge for which there is no adequate verbal expression.

You may doubt this now. You may think the ingenuity of man is adequate to the task of finding a name for anything in his experience. So it is, but the name will convey no meaning to a person who has not had the same experience. This is true, even in ordinary science. The dictionary is full of words which have no meaning except for men and women who have experienced what those words describe.

Paracelsus, for example, coined many new alchemical terms. Yet they designate experiences familiar to every adept. What do his words mean to uninitiated readers? Less than nothing. Moreover, to those who have made the discovery, the new terms are no better than the old. He who knows what the First Matter is, has no difficulty with the obscure language of the sages, for he has seen what they saw, and knows that the seeming darkness of their words is really the darkness of ignorance in the minds of readers who have not shared their experience.

If all this be true, what is the use of reading the writings of the alchemists? If they cannot tell the secret, why bother with their vain endeavors to do so? The answer to questions like these is that reading the alchemists is itself a kind of yoga practice, which attunes the mind of the reader to the mental vibration of the writer.

Such reading, combined with meditation, leads us to the point where we begin to infer what the sages mean. Then we may test the inference by experiment. If our idea is wrong (and at the outset it often is), the experiment fails. When our inference is correct, our experiments end in the actual discovery of the First Matter.

In these lessons, we aim to put you in the way of drawing correct inferences from the words of the sages. Then we shall indicate methods whereby you may test the inferences. We begin, therefore, with a series of quotations from alchemical texts. These we have endeavored to arrange so that your mind may be led nearer the truth by the mere reading. In addition to this careful arrangement of the material, we give enough comment to help you arrive at correct conclusions concerning the meaning.

Take your time. Haste and impatience will retard your progress. In separating the etherial spirit from the gross letter of these quotations, remember the admonition of



THE EMERALD TABLET and perform the operation with sweetness as well as with ingenuity. Bear ever in mind that the object of the Great Work is identical with that of yoga. It is the liberation of the alchemist from the bonds of delusion.

This does not require abandonment of the world. As one Eastern writer says: "The knower of the Essence, enjoying the pleasures of the senses with moderation, but knowing them for what they are, may derive both temporal and spiritual pleasure, even like one having knowledge of two languages." --Panchadasi

What is it to know the enjoyments of the senses for what they are? Consider the answer given by the YOGAVASISHTHA:

"The whole world is Spirit, there is nothing else in reality. Betake thyself to this view of things and rest in peace, thus regaining thy real Self."

Read the quotations slowly and carefully. Do this with the definite intention of grasping what they say. Adepts write carefully, and choose their words with great pains. Your first endeavor should be to impress these words on your memory, avoiding the slightest attempt at interpretation. The less you try to guess at the meaning, the quicker will it dawn upon you.

#### WORDS OF THE SAGES CONCERNING THE FIRST MATTER

"As concerns the matter, it is one, and contains within itself all that is needed. Its birth is in the sand. It is the distilled moisture of the Moon, joined to the light of the Sun and congealed." --- Anastratus

"The object of your desire is the one thing out of which all things are made."

--- Rosinus

"The beginning of all those things which God hath created is weight and proportion, for weight rules all things, and the weight and mass of the earth is manifest in proportion; but weight is not found except in body. --- Turba Philosophorum

"It is that which is not known, because in this world it is discerned by reason without the clients thereof, which are sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch . . . The creature which is cognized in none of these five ways is a sublime creature, and, as such, is neither seen nor felt, but is perceived by reason alone . . . The sublime creature has no need of the light of this Sun, because the Sun is beneath that creature, which is more subtle and more lucid . . . Know also that the created world is composed of two dense things and two rare things, but nothing of the dense is in the sublime creature."

--- Turba Philosophorum

"Know, all present, that no true tincture is made except from our copper. Do not, therefore, exhaust your brains and your money, lest ye fill your hearts with sorrow. I will give you a fundamental axiom, that unless you turn the aforesaid copper into white and make visible coins, and then afterwards turn it again into redness until a tincture results, verily, ye accomplish nothing. Burn therefore the copper, break it up, deprive it of its blackness by cooking, imbuing, and washing until the same becomes white. Then rule it." ---Turba Philosophorum



"It is, in plain terms, a dissolved, flowing and thickened water; or rather it is that which is poured--that is, a dissolution of earth and a certain plasticity of earth, an exceedingly soft, moist, fusible, flowing earth, an earth of wax that is capable of all forms and impressions. It is watery earthiness, the Son of the earth mixed with water, and, so to speak as the nature of the thing requires, that which has become mixed with earth and the spouse of earth. The learned alchemist defines it a divine and living silver, an union of the spirit in first matter. It is a divine, animated mass, of complexion somewhat like silver, the union of masculine and feminine spirits . . . The thing itself is a world without form, neither mere power nor perfect action, but a weak, virgin substance, a certain soft, prolific Venus, the very love and seed, the mixture and moisture of heaven and earth. This moisture is the mother of all things in the world."

--Thomas Vaughan

Centuries separate Thomas Vaughan from the Turba Philosophorum, but they are in perfect agreement. For the Turba says the First Matter is "copper," and Vaughan calls it "Venus". The two words mean exactly the same thing and indicate the place where the student should look for the First Matter.

"The original matter is really a kind of stone, which, being hard and solid like a stone, may be pounded, reduced to powder and resolved into its three elements (which Nature herself has joined together), and then again may be recombined into a solid stone of the fusibility of wax, by the skilled hand of the artist, adjusting the law of Nature."

--The Sophic Hydrolith

Basil Valentine writes: "Cease to seek it in the animal kingdom; for Nature herself could not find it there." He says also it is a mineral, and incombustible. It cannot be found in the animal kingdom because there its nature is too completely veiled. It is incombustible because no fire can burn the essence of fire. It is mineral because it is the essential substance of whatever is mined.

"It is a stone and no stone, Spirit, Soul, and Body; which if thou dissolvest, it will be dissolved, and if thou dost coagulate it, it will be coagulated, and if thou dost make it fly, it will fly. For it is volatile, flying, and clear as a tear; afterwards it is made citrine, then saltish, but without shoots or crystals, and no man may touch it with his tongue. Behold, I have described it truly to thee, but I have not named it! Now, I will name it, and I say that if thou sayest it Water, thou dost say the truth, and if thou sayest it is not Water, thou dost lie. Be not, therefore, deceived with manifold descriptions and operations, for it is but one thing, to which nothing extraneous may be added."

--Arnoldus de Villa Nova

"The matter itself is found everywhere. It flies with fowls in the air, swims with fishes in the sea, it is discerned by the reason of angels, and it governs man and woman."

--George Ripley

"The matter lies before the eyes of all; everybody sees it, touches it, loves it, but knows it not. It is glorious and vile, precious and of small account, and is found everywhere . . . But, to be brief, our Matter has as many names as there are things in this world; that is why the foolish know it not."

--The Golden Tract



"Know, my sons, that the sages take a living and indestructible water. Do not, then, set your hands to this task until you know the power and efficacy of this water. For nothing can be done in our Art without this indestructible water. For the sages have described its power and efficacy as being that of spiritual blood. Transmute this water into body and spirit, and then, by the grace of God, you will have the spirit firmly fixed in the body." --Dardanius

"I bid you take that mystic substance, white magnesia, and have a care that the Stone be pure and bright. Then place it in its aqueous vessel, and subject it to a gentle heat, until it first becomes black, then again white, then red. The whole process should be accomplished in forty days. When you have done this, God shows you the first substance of the Stone, which is an eagle-stone, and known to all men." --Neophides

"How wonderful is the agreement of sages in the midst of difference! They all say they have prepared the Stone out of a substance which by the vulgar is looked upon as the vilest thing on earth. Indeed, if we were to tell the vulgar here the ordinary name of our substance, they would look upon our assertion as a daring falsehood. But if they were acquainted with its virtue and efficacy, they would not despise that which is, in reality, the most precious thing in the world. God has concealed this mystery from the foolish, the ignorant, the wicked, and the scornful, in order that they may not use it for evil purposes." --Pythagoras, in his Fourth Table

"In the Stone of the philosophers are the first elements, and the final colors of minerals, or Soul, Spirit, and Body, joined unto one. The stone which contains all these things is called Zibeth (זבת, "handful," numerically 492, the value of צוד עזלמים, tsore olahmim, Everlasting ROCK, translated "Everlasting Strength," in the Authorized Version of Isaiah 26:4,) and the working of Nature has left it imperfect." ---Lamech

"It is a stone, and not a stone, viz., the eagle-stone. The substance has in its womb a stone, and when it is dissolved, the water that was coagulated in it bursts forth. Thus the Stone is the extracted spirit of our indestructible body. It contains mercury, or liquid water, in its body, or fixed earth, which retains its nature. This explanation is sufficiently plain." ---Rosarius

Your first reading of these extracts may do more to bewilder than to enlighten you. In time, however, as you go over these words of the sages again and again, the inner meaning will begin to open itself to you. It would do so without any commentary if you persisted long enough; but, beginning with the next lesson, we shall do what we can to help you arrive at the true interpretation of these hard sayings.



# THE GREAT WORK

## Lesson Six

### THE FIRST MATTER 2

The author of THE GLORY OF THE WORLD writes:

"I make known to all ingenuous students of this Art that the sages are in the habit of using words which may convey either a true or a false impression; the former to their own disciples and children, the latter to the ignorant, the foolish, and the unworthy. Bear in mind that the philosophers themselves never make a false assertion. The mistake (if any) lies not with them, but with those whose dullness makes them slow to apprehend the meaning. Hence it comes that, instead of the waters of the Sages, these inexperienced persons take pyrites, salts, metals, and diverse other substances which, though very expensive, are of no use whatever for our purpose. For no one would dream of buying the true Matter at the apothecary's; nay, that tradesman daily casts it into the street as worthless refuse."

Just now there is special need that the Great Work be performed by all who are qualified to undertake it. We are in the midst of a crisis in human affairs, such as the race has not faced in milleniums. Every available means is being employed to increase the number of persons having insight sufficient to deal with the problems besetting us, and power adequate for the work which must be done to solve these problems. Thus Those Who Know are making it easier for earnest inquirers to learn the secret.

It is just as impossible as ever to tell the secret. Every seeker must make the discovery for himself. What can, and will, be done is to help inquirers to draw the inferences which will prepare them to make the discovery. Be on your guard! As you proceed with this lesson, you may come to a point where you will say: "Why, of course! The First Matter is . . . ." whatever you may decide.

You may conclude that it is the ether of space. You may suppose it to be the same as Akasha. We do not say that either of these conclusions is wrong. We simply warn you that no such inference is to be mistaken for the discovery of the First Matter.

Suppose you were at the entrance to an unlighted room, perishing of hunger. Suppose you found on the door a cryptic description of the contents of the room from which you drew the correct inference that all manner of good things to eat were on a table inside. Could you eat the inference?

So it is with the First Matter. By using reason, you may be able to determine what it must be. We shall do what we can to aid your efforts to come to a correct inference as to what the First Matter is. Yet the discovery is more than a reasoned conclusion. It is direct perception and goes beyond reason.

Remembering what Paracelsus said concerning "the use of the Qabalists," we shall employ Qabalah freely in our endeavor to elucidate the meaning of writings of the adepts. If you are unfamiliar with Qabalistic methods, they will probably seem far from any mode of thinking to which you are accustomed. As you progress, practice will make this kind of thinking easier.



At first, however, it may be well to concentrate more particularly on the conclusions than on the manner in which they are reached. As you proceed, you will begin to understand the Qabalistic method; but at first you will do well to devote most of your time to pondering its results.

### COMMENT ON THE WORDS OF THE SAGES

All sages are agreed that the First Matter is one, and, as Anastratus says, contains within itself all that is needed. Availing ourselves here of the Qabalah, we find that the Hebrew word for "one" is אחד, achad or echud, and that because the sum of the values of its letters is 13, it corresponds to בְּהוּ, bohu, "emptiness, chaos." This is applied, in Genesis 1:2, to the first state of the earth, where the Authorized Version translates bohu as "void." Here we find a point of agreement with others who call the First Matter a "chaos."

Yet this is not all. The number 13 is the value also of הִגְהֵה, hegeh, meaning "sound, muttering, thought or musing." What is intimated is that the primary chaos is the stuff thoughts are made of, and that it is, moreover, a mode of vibration closely related to sound.

Anastratus goes on to say: "Its birth is in the sand." The Hebrew for "sand" is חֹל, khool, and the root of the noun is a verb spelled with the same letters meaning, "to turn round, to twist, to whirl." In all probability, the connection is from ancient observation of desert whirlwinds, tossing the sand into spiral shapes, seeming to be alive, to which may be traced the tales about genii.

This word khool, moreover, has a meaning definitely related to the First Matter, for often alchemists call this their Phoenix, and, according to Gesenius, the word חֹל, in Job 29:18, was understood by the Jewish Rabbins as being a reference to this mythical bird.

The origin of the First Matter is actually a spiral, twisting motion like that made visible by sand in a desert storm. It is also a motion directly connected with sound and with thought. Thought-force is a real force, and thought-substance a real substance. He who would perform the Great Work must needs learn that thoughts are really things.

Again, חֹל is composed of Hebrew letters whose values are 8, 6 and 30, so that the word is the number 44, which is the value of the noun דָּם, dam, "blood." This takes us a step nearer to what we are seeking, for it is from blood that we derive the substance we use in the Great Work. That substance is something which actually moves in spirals through our bodies. It is said to be "the distilled moisture of the moon, joined to the light of the sun," because it is identical with the lunar and solar currents of Prana described by yogis. And Anastratus agrees with other adepts when he says this union of solar light and lunar moisture is "congealed," or brought into a solid state by a process involving a gradual loss of heat.

Man's conceptions of reality are largely derived from sensations of mass, weight and solidity. Actually a solid is frozen mind-stuff. Solidity is an illusion. We think of



gold as being solid because we are accustomed to seeing this metal at a temperature below that at which it crystallizes. We think of mercury as a liquid because our ordinary experiences of this metal are sensations of its appearance at a temperature above its point of crystallization. By thought-controlled use of energy within us, it is possible to congeal mind-stuff into physical forms, and the substance on which this operation is performed is the First Matter.

Thus Rosinus tells us that the object of our desire is the one thing out of which all things are made. This one thing is transformed from invisibility into visibility by what we call weight, or gravitation. The dictionaries say gravitation is an unknown force, but the makers of dictionaries are not alchemists. The sages know what lexicographers have yet to discover. They know gravitation is a mental power, working at the level of awareness which psychology calls self-consciousness.

In self-consciousness resides the power which determines weight and proportion. It does not matter that few human beings are aware of this fact. Ignorance of a fact does not erase it. It simply prevents us from using the fact. What alchemists mean us to understand when they say the Great Work is performed by the aid of Mercury is that one of the powers of human self-consciousness is this ability to direct the "unknown force" of gravitation. For Mercury was the Roman god corresponding to the Greek Hermes and the Egyptian Thoth, personifying the form-determining power of self-consciousness. This is why Mercury is represented in Tarot by the Magician. Magic is the art of using the power of self-consciousness to congeal invisible, formless substance into tangible, physical forms.

That this power dwells in human beings as a potentiality of self-consciousness we learn from the yogis. Yoga enables one to direct and adapt modes of light-vibration from the self-conscious level. This is evident when we remember that all yoga practice begins with acts of conscious attention.

One of the powers of a yogi is that of levitation. He can make his own body levitate, and he can alter the weight of objects outside his body. That is, he controls gravitation. So does an adept in alchemy, and by such control the Great Work is accomplished. Without it, moreover, it is impossible to make the physical agent of transmutation we mentioned in the first of these lessons.

Passing now to our second quotation from the Turba, we must be on our guard. It says: "In this world it is discerned by reason without the clients thereof," which are the senses. Here is a good example of alchemical subtlety. "This world" is the world of man's sensations. Thus it is quite true that in "this world" the First Matter is perceived by reason alone. Yet this rational perception is only a prelude to the actual discovery of the First Matter. Thus it is evident that the discovery is not made in "this world." Nor is it made by the exercise of physical sensation. The point is that there are other worlds than this to which man has access through the unfoldment of a higher kind of perception to which right reasoning is but the introduction. Reasoning prepares the mind for this higher knowledge.

The quotation from the Turba given in Lesson 5 is more explicit than any of the



others. It says the tincture is made from "our copper;" and the next quotation, from Thomas Vaughan, indicates the same thing when it calls the First Matter, "a certain soft, prolific Venus."

As an alchemical metal, copper is the same as the Venus center, and this is the yoga lotus, or chakra, situated at the well of the throat. ♀

It is the center of what Hinduism calls Kama Manas, the desire nature. To change this "copper" into "white" is to raise the activity of the Venus center to the level of the Moon center behind the root of the nose. To "make visible coins" is to produce tangible physical results as a consequence of the operation.

This will be better understood by readers who have studied Tarot if they remember that the suit of coins or pentacles refers to the plane of concrete, manifested results. To make our "copper" into "white" is to utilize the desire force of creative imagination, which Tarot symbolizes as the Empress, and raise it to the higher level of clear recollection pictured by the High Priestess.

Active desire is the raw material, but it has to be purged of the separateness which is mixed with it. We must rid our desire of the quality of personal attachment. Then we can see clearly how what we want personally may be put into right relation with other elements of the cosmic pattern. The urge of personal desire has to be transformed into the will for manifestation of certain aspects of cosmic law.

Our copper, personal desire, has to be subjected to fire, or to the influx of spiritual energy. It has to be broken up, or analyzed into its component elements. It has to be deprived of the blackness of ignorance and attachment. Then it becomes clear white because it is transformed into recognition of some aspect of the great pattern of universal law, symbolized in Tarot by the pattern on the veil behind the High Priestess, and by the book or scroll on her lap.

What is meant by this is that what we conceive as a personal desire is invariably the drive of some universal tendency which we are able to bring into manifestation. To do this to the best advantage, we must analyze what we desire until we see the principles it embodies. Then we must purge it of attachment and ignorance and relate it to those principles of universal law which give it cosmic, as well as personal, significance. This is what is meant by changing "our copper" into "white," that is to say, into "our silver."

After this is done, we must again turn it into redness. Red is the color of Mars, and always refers to action. When the white of clear perception of truth is permeated with the redness of action, then the Tincture is made, and the silver is transmuted into the gold of complete realization. Hence, at the end of the quotation we read, "Then rule it." What is to be ruled is the purified desire nature. To rule it we must act, for rule is the control of activity.

Do not be confused. Early in this part of our explanation we spoke of the relation of "copper" to a center in the throat. This is a cluster of nerves and glands which are brought under control by the work we have just outlined. No attempt at direct concen-



tration on the throat center should be made. The wise yogi and the wise alchemist leave such attempts to tyros. They understand that, in the long run, the quickest and safest way is to set up behavior patterns of thought and action which will automatically insure the desired function of the centers involved in those patterns.

What alchemy has to say about copper goes even deeper than this. One of the ancient Semitic names for copper is נחש, Nachash, and this is also the name of the serpent in the Biblical allegory of Eden. The number of this word is 358, which is also the value of משיח, Messiach or Messiah, "The Anointed," corresponding to English noun Christ.

What has to be transmuted, made white, and then tintured with redness, is this same serpent power. In the Hebrew alphabet it is represented by Teth, the serpent. In Tarot it is pictured as a red lion, tamed by a woman robed in white, as shown in Key 8.

One has only to read the allegory of the Fall to see that the serpent personifies the power of sensation to arouse desire. What the Inner School has always known and taught is that when this power is rightly understood and properly directed, it may be transformed into the instrumentality of liberation.

Because the truth here intimated is easily misunderstood it is always reserved. To exoteric religionists it is anathema, because they cannot understand what seems to them to be a blasphemous identification of good and evil.

They do not notice that the story of the Fall plainly declares that the disaster was a consequence of attempting to sustain life by assimilating knowledge of good and evil. That is to say, the error in eating the forbidden fruit is the very one these exoteric religionists perpetuate. They insist that certain forms of activity are essentially good, and that other forms are essentially bad.

Were this true, it would be necessary to be able to distinguish good forms from bad, and the sad experience of ages demonstrates the utter impossibility of this. We cannot gain our liberty by this mistaken use of our power to discriminate. To attempt it is to eat the forbidden fruit, and the inevitable penalty is death.

The higher wisdom realized the relativity of what human ignorance supposes to be absolute. Man calls whatever he fears, whatever seems to threaten his comfortable security, whatever in his experience appears to have a disintegrating effect upon him, "evil." What he likes, what seems to him to make for security, what he thinks he understands and can use to promote what he conceives to be his welfare, he believes to be "good." All too often, it turns out that he is mistaken.

If we could live for milleniums, we never could arrive at absolute certainty, either as to objectives, or as to ways to attain them, did we have to be certain of all the good, and equally certain of all the evil. Thus it is evident there must be another way, and that way is the method of occult science.

The wise see the relativity of human standards based on superficial experience.



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They unite to proclaim that appearances of evil are actually indications of unrealized potencies, leading to positive good. They say the serpent power may be transformed into the instrument of liberation. They show us exactly what must be done in order to effect this transformation.

In Lesson 7 we shall continue our comments on the words of the sages concerning the First Matter. In so doing we shall avail ourselves of many clues from the Holy Qabalah.

Watching thus the multiplicity of existences  
 Proceeding from my single essence,  
 I understand them in all their relations.  
 I perceive that their beginning, middle, and end  
     Is in truth myself.  
 Thus do I see that all things,  
 Whatsoever their appearance,  
 Because they spring from mine own nature  
     Are grounded in goodness.

My superior nature is reflected also  
 In the mind of man, created in mine image.  
 Know me thus as the source of all true will.  
 Know me also as the power to perceive objects  
     As having the appearance  
     Of standing outside and apart from  
     Him who regardeth them.

(From the BOOK OF TOKENS by Dr. Paul Foster Case)



# THE GREAT WORK

## Lesson Seven

### THE FIRST MATTER 3

Turning now to our quotation from THE SOPHIC HYDROLITH (Lesson 5), we read that the First Matter is really a kind of stone which may be reduced to powder and resolved into its three elements.

The stone here mentioned is the same stone which has been explained in many earlier lessons of our curriculum. It is אבן, ehben. Its first letter, Aleph, represents Ruach, the Life-Breath. The second letter corresponds to Mercury. The last letter is the alphabetical symbol for Scorpio, the zodiacal sign typifying the reproductive power in all living things, the principle of growth always associated in ancient occult writings with water.

Thus the Hebrew word for stone definitely indicates three characteristics often mentioned in alchemical descriptions of the First Matter. It is a vital essence (Aleph). It is something the adepts have agreed to call Mercury (Beth). It is something they also name the Sperm or Seed of the World, something they often call Water, and something they sometimes describe as Gluten of the White Eagle (Nun).

We have hitherto shown that the first two letters of אבן form the Hebrew noun Ab, Father, while the last two spell Ben, Son. In Qabalah, Ab, the Father, is one of the names of the second Sephirah, Chokmah, Wisdom. Ben, the Son, is a name of the sixth Sephirah, Tiphareth, Beauty.

Chokmah is held to be the seat of the life-force in man. Tiphareth is the seat of the personal ego and of the power of generating mental images. Thus the word Ehben intimates that the First Matter is something which combines the life-force with the power of generating mental images. It should be understood that this latter power is by no means restricted to the generation of visual or pictorial images. Images corresponding to all the senses are generated by the Ruach in Tiphareth.

Here alchemy and Qabalah are in full accord with yoga. The latter holds that whatever exists is an expression of conscious, vital energy. This energy produces all the multiplicity of forms, on every plane, by the same power we exercise when we make a mental image.

Patanjali says yoga is control of the thinking principle. This means control of the power which produces mental images. Even the most abstract thinking requires imagery. In the higher kinds of abstraction, images of physical objects are replaced by symbols not directly associated with sensory objects, as, for example, the numbers and letters employed by mathematicians.

Yet these numbers and letters, when examined, turn out to be conventionalized pictures. It is true that in a mathematical equation, as a rule, the things originally pictured by the numbers and letters are lost sight of, and the symbols have an arbitrary meaning attached to them by agreement among mathematicians. Yet these conventional



symbols are none the less images, and they are combined and arranged just as if they were actual objects.

The same is true of the notes in music. To a person who cannot read music, they have no meaning. To a skilled composer they are not only symbols for sounds, but, in the actual practice of composition, are as certainly heard with the mind's ear as they are seen with the physical eye.

What needs emphasis here is that though a great number of mental images have to be used as patterns for muscular or mechanical action on the physical plane, before they can be made manifest as tangible realities. There is also abundant evidence to show that some persons are able to materialize mental images without the intervention of muscular or mechanical activities between the mental image and the physical result. Some of these materializations are evanescent, like those in a seance conducted by a genuine materializing medium. Others are relatively permanent, like those of the miracle of the loaves and fishes, or like some others in which the materialized object has enduring physical properties.

It is simply ignorance of the facts, which are as well attested as any other facts, that leads to denial of the possibility of this direct production of physical forms by the exercise of powers possessed by human beings of unusual, but perfectly natural, attainments. The power to produce this kind of materialization is latent in every human being. To bring it into actual expression is one of the objects of the Great Work. For it is really the power to control etheric vibration, a term far from satisfactory, but employed here because its general meaning will be more or less familiar to our readers.

The bringing of this latent power into actual manifestation is what makes possible the preparation of the physical agency of metallic transmutation. Inability to employ this power prevents those who have not accomplished the first phase of the Great Work from replenishing their supply of the transmuting agent, in those rare instances when they come into possession of some of it by receiving it from a true adept, or by finding it where it has been hidden by its maker.

When Basil Valentine warns his readers not to seek the First Matter in the animal kingdom, he tells the truth, as we have already said. And writers also, who, like Arnoldus de Villa Nova, insist that one speaks truth when saying the First Matter is water, are really agreeing with Valentine in calling it a mineral, since even ordinary water is classed by physicists as a mineral.

George Ripley's description is unusually clear. He says the First Matter is omnipresent, but his remarks about fowls and fishes serve to turn the attention of a thoughtful reader to air and water as being places in which its presence may be detected most easily. Of all that Ripley says about the First Matter, his remark, "it governs man and woman," is the most illuminating. We forbear to comment on it because we know from experience that no words can express what this seed-idea will develop in the student's consciousness if only he takes the hint and meditates on it.

It is because the First Matter has as many names as there are things in the world,



says THE GOLDEN TRACT, that the foolish know it not. All men have direct sensory experience of it; but ignorance of the meaning of this experience is what keeps all but a few from recognizing the First Matter. The "reason of angels discerns it," as Ripley says, but the number of "angels" incarnate in the human race at any given time is relatively small.

Here Ripley makes use of a technical term employed in the mystery schools. The average reader supposes an angel to be either an imaginary being, or else an invisible creature belonging to another order of beings, different from humanity. The truth is that the word "angel," as used in the Bible, while it may and often does, refer to a non-human order of beings, is applied also to a certain type of human personality. One who raises his consciousness to a level above that of average humanity becomes aware of certain truths not perceived by ordinary persons. The perception of these truths also arouses in one who recognizes them the desire to impart them to others.

Those who know these truths are conscious messengers of the Higher Self, transmitting to their contemporaries and to posterity, what they have themselves experienced. These are the seers and prophets of all times and races. They have heard the good news, and they cannot help being intensely desirous of communicating it to others. Such persons, though they are incarnate human beings, are members of a higher order who participate in that awareness of the Divine Plan which all religions attribute to angels.

The Hebrew noun for angel, מלאך, malak, means literally, "one sent." Often the word is used in precisely this significance without meaning at all that the person so designated is in any way superior to other human beings.

By Gematria, the word malak is the number 91, and among other correspondences to this number is the noun סוכה, sokeh, "branch, or bough." This recalls the words of Jesus: "I am the vine, and ye (the apostles) are the branches." For when one enters into the higher consciousness, one perceives one's relation to the Great Whole. One realizes the illusive nature of one's apparently independent personal existence. This perception of essential unity serves to correct the common-sense notion that the world is full of a number of things and substances essentially different.

Dardanius makes use of a name for the First Matter which the Bible employs also. He says: "The sages take a living and indestructible water." One remembers the words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman; but he used a phrase which we find in the Old Testament also. Jeremiah identifies Jehovah with "the fountain of living waters," and the same phrase occurs in the Song of Solomon, 4:15. The Hebrew, מים חיים, mem chaim, is the number 158, which is the number of יהוה אלהינו יהוה, Jehovah elohino Jehovah, "Jehovah, our God Jehovah." 158 is also the number of כציון, be-Tzion, "In Zion;" and wherever the Old Testament speaks of Zion, its deeper meaning invariably refers to the Center of human personality, the Point Within, where man makes direct contact with the One Reality designated, but not by any means defined, by the "name" Jehovah.

Notice that Dardanius says the sages have described the power and efficacy of the First Matter as being that of "spiritual blood." We are helped here by Qabalah. The



Hebrew word for "blood" is דם, dam, and the Hebrew letter corresponding to Spirit of Ruach is Aleph. Thus "spiritual blood" hints at the combination of א with אדם, in the name אדם Adam.

This, besides being the generic name for humanity, is one of the special designations for the sixth Sephirah, which is called also בן, Ben, the Son. To the sixth Sephirah is attributed also the Divine Name Jehovah, and we have just considered the Qabalistic connection between this name and mem chaim, "living water."

What is meant here is that the latent power which enables us to perform the Great Work resides in man's own nature. We must find the First Matter in ourselves, and not in the animal kingdom, as Basil Valentine warns us.

One of the basic errors of common-sense, perpetuated by "science falsely so-called," is the notion that man belongs to the animal kingdom. Man's physical body is evolved from the animal kingdom, but is not itself part of that kingdom; and, even in the lowest human tribes, the consciousness of man transcends that of the highest animals. Thus we must not look for the First Matter of the Great Work in the animal kingdom but in man himself.

This is true, even though the First Matter may be correctly described as a mineral, because a mineral is any chemical element or compound occurring naturally as a product of inorganic processes. The processes which bring the First Matter into manifestation are correctly described as being inorganic, because they are the work of a Power having no physical organs. Here we speak plainer than any of our predecessors. Let him who has a mind prepared grasp the meaning, and with it the reason we do not speak more specifically.

Note well that success in the transmutation described by Dardanius is ascribed to the grace of God. Not otherwise may any man or woman make the changes he describes. We never accomplish the Great Work by our own strength. Unless the grace of God be with us, nothing of importance occurs; but when that grace operates, the Spirit is firmly fixed in the body. The spiritual Center is awakened and from thence forward remains in action.

The quotation from Neophides is valuable because it calls the substance a "mystic" substance, thus clearly indicating that it is not the physical thing known as "white magnesia." Henry Khunrath says that by "magnesia" we may understand "magnes-IAH," or, "the magnet of Jah." What he intends to suggest by this statement is that the "mystic substance" is really the attractive principle of Divine Wisdom, for the Divine Name Jah is that assigned by Qabalists to the archetypal aspect of the Sephirah Chokmah, Wisdom.

Chokmah, remember, is also אב, Ab, the Father, and is represented in אבן, ehben, Stone, by the first two letters. The "magnet of Jah" is the power of attraction which establishes the orbits of the planets and the astronomical order of the heavens.



This order is attributed also to Chokmah, and is correlated with Chaiah, the life-force. When we find this in ourselves, when we recognize that the "Father" actually dwells "in Zion," or at the Center, we have found the secret of all power.

Thus Neophides bids us have a care that the Stone be pure and bright. We must not mix anything with our perception of this Central Identity, and we must work until this perception is clear and intensely brilliant.

Then it is to be placed in its "aqueous vessel." This, need we say to readers who have the preparation required before they have been given opportunity to study these lessons, is none other than subconsciousness, always receptive like a vessel and always symbolized by water. The reference to "forty days" in this passage is like many other references to the number 40 in Qabalistic writings. It relates to what is pictured in Tarot by Key 12 which illustrates the meaning of that letter.

Neophides concludes by telling us that the Stone is an eagle-stone known to all men. Here we need only remember that the eagle is one of the symbols for the sign Scorpio. The eagle-stone is truly known to all men, but few are acquainted with its wonderful potencies. Superficial knowledge of it all men have, but how many ever suspect what may be accomplished by means of this marvelous substance? Yet all the sages indicate plainly where to look for it and exactly what it is, forbearing only to name it outright.

The reason for their reticence is told in the FOURTH TABLE of Pythagoras. "If we were to tell the vulgar herd the ordinary name of our substance, they would look upon our assertion as a daring falsehood." It is vain to expect one who knows the secret to divulge it. He is well aware of the futility of every attempt to communicate the secret to the unprepared. None but those who already know will believe him. Thus open declaration of the secret will never add to the number of those who know.

It is always to increase the number of those who know that true "angels" write their books on alchemy. Those who do know can always tell when an alchemical treatise has been written by a genuine adept, or by one who has received the true oral tradition from an adept. And in every generation there are always some students who are just on the verge of knowing.

On the verge, yet still deluded by the illusions which blind the eyes of the vulgar. These who are on the verge of knowing are those to whom works like this are specially addressed.

They do not know, but they are ready to find out; and the experience of ages has taught the wise that they who are ready must never be told what they are able to find out for themselves. First-hand discovery carries conviction, and firm conviction is the only basis on which the arduous early stages of the Great Work can possibly be persisted in until success crowns the labors of the artist.

Thus it is always fatal to tell the secret. Yet, to every person who knows the mystery, it is a source of perpetual amazement that what the sages have written can possibly be misunderstood. They who have written, and they who are able to read with understanding, agree that the sages, as Rosarius puts it, make their explanations of the First Matter "sufficiently plain."



# THE GREAT WORK

## Lesson Eight

### THE FIRST MATTER 4

What Pythagoras says about the Stone being made out of a substance which the vulgar look upon as being the vilest thing on earth is perfectly true, but it has led many astray. All sorts of repulsive things have been made subjects of experimentation by those who have supposed they knew, though really remaining in the dark. Yet what Pythagoras declares has been repeated by many another alchemist. It is true also that the substance is not for sale at the apothecary's, and that this tradesman daily casts it out into the street as worthless refuse--or did, in the day when THE GLORY OF THE WORLD was written.

Some have come close to solving the riddles of the sages. Where they fail, however, is in not detecting the truth that alchemists and the vulgar are of one mind in regarding the substance as being the vilest thing on earth. In the form in which this substance is seen by the vulgar, it is vile; but this is not the form in which it is made the subject of the alchemical operation. When the apothecary throws it away, the alchemist does not pick it up. It is truly the most precious thing "in the world," and just as truly is it the vilest thing "on earth."

We are not indulging in mystification. On the contrary, we are doing all we can to put you on the right track. That of which we speak is truly the substance of which everything is made. It is truly a water which "will not wet the hand." That is to say, the form of the universally diffused substance an alchemist employs in the Great Work is really a fluid, generated, as we are told by Philalethes, "from the saline fatness of the earth." It is the most precious thing in the world because it is that out of which the world is made, and that which is therefore rightly known as the Sperm of the World.

This last designation, also, has led many astray, and we shall therefore speak more openly than some others and say outright that the Sperm of the World is not any fluid having direct connection with the generation of human or animal bodies. Not a few persons have thought so, and all manner of practices, some of them exceedingly dangerous, have been based on this misconception.

It is true that in performing the Great Work the vessel must be hermetically sealed, and what is meant by this, at a certain stage of the operation, is exactly what a yogi has in mind when he speaks of Brahmacharya, or the practice of strict sexual continence. This practice, however, has to do with what, in alchemy, is termed the "secret fire." Sexual continence is undoubtedly essential to right performance of the Great Work, in its earlier stages.

There are both psychological and physiological reasons for this. But, as Aldous Huxley points out, in ENDS AND MEANS, sexual continence is not an end in itself, and, as a means, does no more than intensify the powers of those who practice it. Thus it happens, when the ends to which these intensified powers are devoted happen to be bad, as they may be, the increased energy built up by continence makes those who practice it the more dangerous instruments of evil.



Perhaps one of the most enlightening clues to the discovery of the First Matter is the word **זבת**, Zibeth, mentioned in the quotation from Lamech. It means "handful," and thus refers to the letter Yod, which signifies "hand."

From your Tarot studies you have learned that Yod is the letter corresponding to the sign Virgo. This sign is represented in Tarot by Key 9, the Hermit, and in your study of that Key (TAROT FUNDAMENTALS, Lesson 22), some reference was made to the part played by the functions of the Virgo region in transmuting an ordinary human being into an adept.

The same idea is behind this word Zibeth, and you will note that the quotation from Lamech says the working of Nature has left the Stone imperfect. Similarly, Raymond Lully says: "Our Mercury is a water which cannot be found upon earth, for it is not made or manifested in the ordinary course of Nature but by the art and manual operations of man." (Underlining ours.)

Observe that he says our Mercury, the First Matter, is manifested by the manual operations of man. Here, again, we must remember the "use of the Qabalists." For the manual operations are not performed by man's physical hands. They are carried on by the mind alone, or solely by the aid of Mercury, in the field designated by the Qabalistic meaning of hand, that is to say, in the field corresponding to the occult signification of the letter Yod.

Thus we read often that the First Matter is to be sought in "the bowels of the earth," and that there "it lies ready to our hands." We know, too, that the same mystic substance is termed Lac Virginis, or Virgin's Milk, and is described as being an unctuous, oily water.

Understand by "earth" the microcosm, man, and you will solve the riddle easily. The "bowels of the earth" are the part of the human body ruled by Virgo. The Virgin's Milk, the oily water which will not wet the hand, is actually chyle, a milky, fatty lymph which is one of the principal means whereby the blood is supplied with energy derived from food. Basically, the chemical composition of chyle is a combination of lymph and animal fat. Lymph is principally water mixed with some fibrin. It is also slightly alkaline.

It passes from the blood stream into the lymphatic ducts by the exudation of blood plasma from the capillaries. As the lymph courses through the body, it picks up large, white cells, called lymphocytes, from the so-called lymphatic glands. These are not true glands. They are tissues whose office is to specialize the cells called lymphocytes.

In its circulation, the lymph passes into the thoracic duct, after picking up the chyle from the lacteals. The whiteness of chyle is due to the presence of emulsified globules of animal fat. This fat is a combination of three highly complex carbon compounds: olein, stearine and palmatine. Every one of these three is a combination of atoms of three elements: oxygen, hydrogen and carbon. These are the fire (oxygen), water (hydrogen) and earth (carbon) of esoteric chemistry.



When the lymph goes back from the thoracic duct into the blood, the lymphocytes it carries are, for a time, clearly distinguishable from another kind of white corpuscles, the leucocytes. Leucocytes are the body's soldiers, active in fighting disease.

After awhile, the lymphocytes are transformed into leucocytes. That is, they are changed from "civilians" into "soldiers."

We might, therefore, compare the lymphatic circulation to an intricate system of waterways or canals such as connect the towns and cities of a country. These "towns" are the lymphatic tissues in various parts of the body. In them are "born" the civilian population of lymphocytes. Of these, a certain portion are drafted and carried by the lymphatic circulation into the thoracic duct which introduces them into the blood. Then, after a time comparable to the training period required to make civilians into soldiers, the lymphocytes become full-fledged leucocytes.

With them go the supplies they need. These are the complex oxygen-hydrogen-carbon compounds picked up from the chyme in the small intestines by the lacteals. When these supplies enter the blood, they are carried by it to all parts of the body, and the various organs select what they require for their special functions.

According to the "use of the Qabalists," what some alchemists call Lac Virginis, or Virgin's Milk, may be identified as the First Matter. In the special Latin Gematria used by the later alchemical writers, Lac Virginis, and Prima Materia (First Matter) add to the same number.

This is 112. In Hebrew Gematria it is the value of: אל אלים, El eloim, God of gods (Daniel 11:36); הכרִי, chassidkah, Thy Holy One (Psalm 16:10); יהוה אלהים, Jehovah Elohim, the special Divine Name of Binah, the third Sephirah; כבוד אלהים, kabode Elohim, Glory of God (Proverbs 25:2); and בינה אדם, Binah Adam, the understanding of man. You will profit by looking up, and meditating on, the context in the Biblical passages where chassidkah, and kabode Elohim, occur.

Furthermore, from the TREE OF LIFE and MASTER PATTERN lessons, you have learned that Binah is the seat of the Divine Soul, and the source of the specializing and limiting power which brings all forms into manifestation and thereby conceals the essential One Thing under the appearances of multiplicity. That which effects this concealment is the "Glory of God," and your earlier studies have taught you that kabode is a Hebrew noun which carries with it the connotation of weight or gravitation.

Similarly, Jacob Boehme, in speaking of the creative process, calls the "First Property," which, at the beginning of the world, produced salt, stones, bones, and all such things, by the astrological name of Saturn. The alchemical Saturn is this same limiting, compressive property of weight, and thus Binah is the Qabalistic Sphere of Saturn.

What is perhaps one of the most important points in this Gematria of 112 is that the number corresponds to כִּינָה אָדָם, Binah Adam, so that it indicates definitely that the first property of the Life-power, the limiting, compressive property which



produces salt, stones and bones, or the frames of things, is an essential part of the constitution of man. Compare this with the doctrine concerning Neshamah, the Divine Soul, in the MASTER PATTERN lessons.

In all human and animal bodies, this first property is manifested through the action of complex compounds of oxygen, hydrogen and carbon. These are not only the esoteric fire, water and earth. They correspond also to the three alchemical principles, Sulphur, Mercury and Salt.

It is with these complex compounds that alchemists work, and the First Matter of the Great Work (which should be distinguished from the macrocosmic First Matter of the universe, even though the latter is essentially the same as the former) is to be sought in the place where these compounds are taken into the lymphatic circulation. Hence it is written that the First Matter is to be sought in the "bowels of the earth."

What an alchemist does is: 1. to recognize what goes on in his body; 2. to use his knowledge of the control exerted over subconscious processes by self-consciousness to form a definite intention that this body-building function shall act with maximum efficiency to the specific end that the blood shall be charged with a superabundance of energy.

This supercharge of energy wakens to full activity the organ of spiritual vision, the pineal gland. When this "single eye" is opened, the alchemist actually sees that his whole body is full of light. The vision is the complete discovery of the First Matter. As the Great Work progresses from this discovery to the final stage of full realization, the body-building power of subconsciousness changes the alchemist himself into a new creature.

Outwardly, this new creature differs little in appearance from any other human being. His every word and act, however, demonstrate that he belongs to another order of being from mere genus homo sapiens.

He has entered the Fifth Kingdom, and members of this Fifth Kingdom, though among them, as in the kingdoms of nature below man, there are degrees of unfoldment leading ever higher and higher, know themselves to be true sons and daughters of God. This means that they are actually gods with divine powers and the illimitable freedom of beings who know their essential divinity.

When we realize that the Virgin's Milk is the form of the First Matter utilized by adepts in performing the Great Work, much that is puzzling in their descriptions of it is easy to understand. We can see why Morienus said to King Calid: "It is of thee, O King, and thou art its ore." We can understand why Philalethes says the First Matter is a virgin who meets her wooers in foul garments.

Yet here again we must guard ourselves against assuming that we have grasped the whole mystery when we have identified chyle as the form of the First Matter we must bring to perfection. Some of our readers may doubt that anything so ordinary can possibly be the precious substance of the alchemists.

Let them remember Thomas Vaughan who said that most persons would regard the



truth as laughable. Let them consider the story of Paracelsus who promised to show the faculty of a university the Elixir of Life and scandalized them by uncovering a jar filled with excrement.

Most of his contemporaries believed him guilty of perpetrating a gross practical joke. The essence of the jest was that he actually fulfilled his promise. For the original meaning of "elixir" is "ash," or "dry powder," and the excrement Paracelsus displayed is truly the ash of the First Matter.

When the Great Work is understood and carried out, the adept extracts from the contents of the upper part of the intestines (called the Black Dragon because the intestines are disposed in coils, and because, inside the body, they are in darkness) certain essences which are of inestimable value. These are wasted by the average person because he does not know how to complete by art what is only imperfectly accomplished by nature.

By gaining conscious control of the process of intestinal digestion and assimilation, adepts in alchemy fill their veins with the "potable gold," the priceless fluidic radiant energy which not only perfects their vital functions but makes possible also the preparation of the Stone of the Wise. It is in reference to this that some alchemists insist so emphatically that the Stone itself is made of gold, that is, of solar substance.

We repeat, nevertheless, that though what we have written is an explanation of the alchemical mystery more definite than most, it is by no means the discovery of the First Matter. At best, you only know about a certain form of the First Matter, and what you know is only theory. Unless you have more than this merely intellectual result of your first reading of these pages, you have no certainty that we are not advancing mere speculation in the language of certitude.

Dr. Waite, indeed, and not a few others, would say we have done just this. For critics of this type, the same may be said of the declarations of the adepts. Dr. Waite even goes so far as to say the First Matter is nothing but an alchemical hypothesis.

Let us, therefore, conclude this lesson by solemnly assuring you that such critics are in error. The First Matter of the alchemists is a reality. It is truly described as being a Stone, and equally true are the assertions of those who call it Water, or "our Mercury." By no means is it merely a hypothetical substance. Numbers of persons now living know exactly what it is, and have no difficulty in understanding what all genuine alchemists have written concerning it.

In this lesson we have endeavored to turn your thoughts in the right direction. We have shown you where to look. When you have seen for yourself, you will understand how truly the writer of THE GLORY OF THE WORLD phrased it when he said: "Know that our Stone is such that it cannot be adequately described in writing."

In our next lesson we shall continue our comments on the words of the sages. We shall also add to the quotations already given some others which may be as helpful to



you as they have been to many.

In the course of the next four lessons, moreover, we shall give you some specific instructions for practice, to the end that you may more quickly arrive at direct perception of the First Matter. Not every person who wishes to become an alchemist succeeds in doing so, but whosoever will may partake of this Water of Life freely. Alchemical practice, like all true magic, is practice in the use and direction of Will-power. In this connection, you will profit by reviewing our various Tarot lessons on Keys 2, 7, 9, 12 and 17.

All wisdom, therefore,  
Is summed up in knowledge of me.  
To gain this is the aim of all research,  
Of all works, of all devotion.  
From knowledge of me cometh the lesser knowledge  
Of the things which I have brought forth.

Of no avail is this lesser knowledge  
Unless it be founded upon the knowledge  
Of my superior and inferior natures.

Hence it is written:

"Remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth,  
And thy days shall be long."  
To keep me in vivid remembrance is to unite thyself  
To the subtle principle of Life Eternal.

(From the BOOK OF TOKENS by Dr. Paul Foster Case.)



# THE GREAT WORK

## Lesson Nine

### THE FIRST MATTER 5

The First Matter is often called Magnesia, and is so described in the glossary to Dr. Waite's translation of the Hermetic writings of Paracelsus. This description is taken, almost verbatim, from the writings of Thomas Vaughan.

"Magnesia. This term, which is occasionally used by Paracelsus in its alchemical, as distinct from its chemical sense, has received many explanations from the adepts. It is the matter of the Stone which the philosophers sometimes call their red, and sometimes their white magnesia. In the first preparation the chaos is blood-red, because the central sulphur is stirred up and discovered by the philosophical fire. In the second it is exceedingly white and transparent like the heavens. It is something like common quicksilver but of such a celestial and transcendent brightness that nothing on earth can be compared to it. It is a child of the elements, a pure virgin, from whom nothing has been generated as yet. When she breeds, it is by the fire of Nature, which is her husband. She is neither animal, vegetable, nor mineral, nor is she an extraction from these; she is pre-existent to them all and is their mother. She is a pure, simple substance, yielding to nothing but love because generation is her aim, and that is never accomplished by violence. She produces from her heart a thick, heavy, snow-white water, which is the Lac Virginis (Virgin's Milk), and afterwards blood from her heart. Lastly she presents a secret crystal. She is one and three, but at the same time she is four and five. She is the Catholic Magnesia, the Sperm of the World out of which all natural things are generated. Her body is in a sense incorruptible; the common elements will not destroy it, nor does she mix with them essentially. Outwardly she resembles a stone, and yet she is no stone. The philosophers call her their white gum, water of their sea, water of life, most pure and blessed water; she is a thick, permanent, saltish water which does not wet the hand; a dry water, viscous and slimy, and generated from the saline fatness of the earth. Fire cannot destroy her, for she is herself fire, having within her a portion of the universal fire of Nature, and a secret, celestial spirit, animated and quickened by God. She is a middle nature, between thick and thin, not altogether earthly, not wholly igneous, but a mean aerial substance to be found everywhere and at all seasons."

In the statement: "She is one and three, but at the same time she is four and five," find several clues to the arcana of Hermetic Science.

The First Matter is in itself a perfect unity. Hence THE EMERALD TABLET says: "All things are from one, by the mediation of one, . . . and all things have their birth from this one thing by adaptation." Another says of the First Matter, "It is a commonly diffused subject." Similarly, Anastratus says the matter is one, and contains within itself all that is needed. The same declaration, with variations of wording, is made by all sages.

The First Matter is also three, because it contains within itself the three principles: Sulphur, Mercury and Salt. These are not three things of which the First Matter is composed. The First Matter is not a composition. It is a perfectly homogeneous unity.



Rather are the three principles to be understood as being three aspects of the nature of the One Thing, inseparable from it, and from one another. Sulphur, Mercury and Salt are three ways in which the First Matter manifests itself, three phases of its behavior.

The First Matter is said to be four, because it is expressed as the four elements: fire, water, air and earth. These, as THE BOOK OF TOKENS says, are really subtle, invisible entities, and should not be understood to signify anything limited to the physical plane. From Yoga philosophy we learn that fire is the subtle principle of sight, water the subtle principle of taste, air the subtle principle of touch, and earth the subtle principle of smell.

Each principle has also a characteristic property. The property of fire is expansion; that of water is contraction; that of air is locomotion; and that of earth is cohesion. Every principle has also a characteristic taste quality. Fire is hot and pungent; water is cool, astringent, bitter; air is acid, sour and sharp; earth is sweet.

These last should be compared with Jacob Boehme's doctrine that in the Primary Substance there is a two-fold fire, having the qualities of bitterness and sharpness. Boehme knew nothing of Yoga philosophy as such, but he had the same kind of experience as that which is the basis of Yoga doctrine. He was, in fact, a European Yogi. It is significant, therefore, that in all his attempts to explain his philosophy he employed alchemical language.

The subtle principles of Yoga philosophy are sometimes called "ethers," as in Rama Prasad's book, NATURE'S FINER FORCES, where we read that Tejas (fire) is the luminiferous ether; that Apas (water) is the gustiferous ether; that Vayu (air) is the tangiferous ether; and that Prithivi (earth) is the odoriferous ether.

We dislike this confusing use of the word "ether." In the esoteric teaching, there are said to be subdivisions of the ether, and these are sometimes loosely designated as the first, second, third and fourth ethers; but the term properly belongs only to the grossest manifestation of Akasha, and Akasha, as you learned from Lesson 3, is identical with the alchemical Quintessence.

The Sanskrit name for "principle" is Tattva, sometimes spelled Tattwa. Its literal meaning is "reality." This meaning carries a genuine significance. It indicates that the Tattvas are not merely hypothetical entities. They are not just human notions or names. They have actual being. They are real forces which give us our consciousness of sight, taste, touch and smell. From these, and from the fifth principle, out of which they all proceed or are derived, we formulate our whole awareness of the world surrounding us.

We perceive nothing whatever directly. All we know are various combinations of sensations. Not that what we perceive in the world round us is unreal. What we must grasp is that the reality is not the same as our sensory perceptions. Our world is a synthesis of sensations. Sensation is all that we know, and sensation gives no immediate report of the real world.

The First Matter is said to be five, because it includes another principle besides



the four whose activities produce in us our ordinary experience of the physical world. In alchemical writings this principle is called the Quintessence, and is usually said to be "extracted" from the four elements in the course of the Great Work. This is said because we derive our awareness of the Quintessence from our experience of the operation of the other four. The Quintessence, however, is not in itself an extraction from the four other principles. It is not derived from them. They are derived from it.

The Sanskrit name for the Quintessence is Akasha. Akasha is said to have neither touch, taste, color nor odor. Its fundamental quality is that of space. Here we encounter a difficulty. There is a difference between absolute space, or Akasha, and relative space, such as we ordinarily conceive. Relative space, as Einstein has indicated, is curved and finite. It may not be very exact to say that Akasha, or absolute space, contains relative space; but this is as near as we can come to the truth of the matter, considering the limitations of human speech.

Akasha, moreover, is the subtle principle of sound. This is not ordinary sound, the atmospheric vibration which we hear. It is the original power of vibration. It is the undifferentiated Life-power, the source of all other manifestations. For this unmanifest reality we can frame no adequate definition. To us it seems to be No-Thing, or we find ourselves thinking of it as being perfectly empty space. This is why the sages of India say the fundamental quality of Akasha is pure space. Because space is omnipresent, they teach also that Akasha is all-pervading.

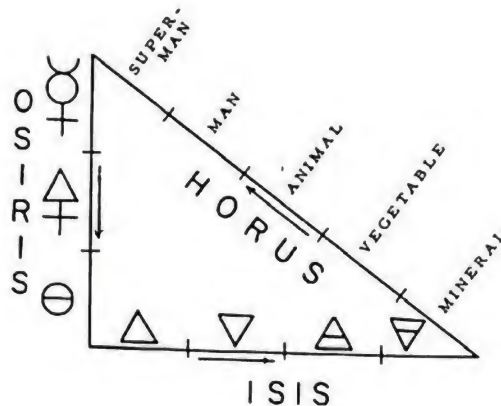
Rama Prasad says: "The Akasha is the most important of all the Tattvas. It must, as a matter of course, precede and follow every change of state on every plane of life. Without this, there can be no manifestation or cessation of forms. It is out of Akasha that every form comes, and it is in Akasha that every form lives. The Akasha is full of forms in their potential state. It intervenes between every two of the five Tattvas."

Here, by the way, is a hint for Tarot students as to the place of the Fool in the whole series of major trumps. Just as 0 is the logical predecessor of 1, so, in the Tarot pack, the Fool precedes the Magician, numbered 1. The power the Fool represents is, however, that which precedes every number, and follows every number also. Between every two numbers there is the zero, so that what is to be understood by the series, 1, 2, 3, 4, is really 0, 1, 0, 2, 0, 3, 0, 4, 0--and so on, through all extension of the series. It is noteworthy, also, that the zero sign, an oval, is the Hindu symbol for Akasha.

Many symbols refer to the idea that the First Matter is "one, which is also three, four and five." Among them is the Great Pyramid, one structure, representing by its triangular faces the number three, by its square base the number four, and by its apex and four corners (also its sides and base) the number five. The apron worn by Freemasons, and similar aprons worn in other ceremonial organizations based on the Western Tradition, are also symbols of unity representing the number three by a triangular flap, the number four by the square shape of the aprons themselves, and the number five by the four corners of the square apron and the fifth point the apex of the triangular flap.

Yet another symbol of the First Matter and of the Great Work is the celebrated Pythagorean triangle, sacred to Osiris, Isis and Horus, having these proportions:





In this triangle the figure itself is the One, representing the all-pervading First Matter. The vertical line, descending, is that of Osiris, the Father, and its divisions are attributed to the three principles, Mercury, Sulphur and Salt. The horizontal line is that corresponding to Isis, and has four units, representing the elements fire, water, air and earth. The ascending hypotenuse, corresponding to Horus, the Son, contains five units, and shows the five stages in the development of the Life-power's manifestation.

The first stage is that of the mineral. Then comes the plant. After the plant is the animal. Above the animal is the natural man. Above the natural man is the man who has made himself the subject of the Great Work, he who is adept, master and magus. He completes the Great Work by becoming one with the Father, even as the line of Horus in this triangle completes itself by arriving at the point where the line attributed to Osiris begins to descend.

In Lesson 7 we discussed the alchemical meaning of אבן, ehben, Stone, which combines the words אב, Ab, Father, and בן, Ben, Son. We have also mentioned elsewhere that the number of this word is 53. This is the number of חמה, khammaw, the Hebrew poetical name for "Sun." The same number, 53, is that designating the degrees formed by the angle of the Pythagorean triangle where the hypotenuse ascribed to Horus, joins the vertical line ascribed to Osiris. Thus, on this triangle, the number 53 defines the union of the Son, Horus, with the Father, Osiris. That is, Osiris is Ab, and Horus is Ben. Both are solar deities.

Since the angular relationship between the hypotenuse and the vertical line is 53 degrees, the angle formed by the base and the hypotenuse must necessarily be one of 37 degrees, inasmuch as the three interior angles of any triangle always total 180 degrees, and in this triangle, the angle between the vertical line and the base is a right angle, or angle of 90 degrees.

The angular relation of the hypotenuse to the base is always that of 37 degrees, at any point on the hypotenuse. And at any point on the hypotenuse the angle in relation to the vertical line is always 53 degrees. The relation of the evolving forms of the Life-power to Mother Nature, whence those forms rise, is always the same. The same laws



and forces are at work in the stone as in the perfect master. The differences are differences in form, in range of expression. In the stone, the direction or impulse of those laws and forces is also the same as it is in the master. All the forces of nature move together toward the perfect union of the Son with the Father, and toward the perfect union, also, of the powers of the Father and the Mother in the manifestation of the Son.

Thus the Pythagorean triangle is a summary of the fundamentals of alchemy, showing the descent of Spirit into Nature as the cause of the ascent of consciousness through five great stages, back to perfect identification with the Primal Source. It may be too much to say that the ancient Egyptians had alchemy in mind when they adopted this triangle as a symbol for their Holy Family. We merely point out that this triangle was used by alchemists to summarize their doctrine because its mathematical properties are such that it lends itself easily to such symbolic interpretation.

One, and One only, am I in essence;  
Changeless, indivisible;  
Concealing within my being  
The Ten Lights of divine emanation.

In this, mine unalterable unity,  
Am I supreme,  
And none is equal unto me.  
Yet though I myself remain unchanged  
Throughout eternity,  
My power doth manifest itself in ceaseless change.

(From THE BOOK OF TOKENS, by Dr. Paul Foster Case)



# THE GREAT WORK

## Lesson Ten

### THE FIRST MATTER 6

When Anastratus says of the First Matter, "Its birth is in the sand," he refers to the mineral stage of development symbolized in the Pythagorean triangle by the first division of the ascending hypotenuse.

When we apply Qabalistic principles to the interpretation of his words, we find that they suggest whirling motion, and that they have also a direct connection with the ancient Egyptian symbol of immortality, the phoenix. לול, khool, "sand," is also the root of the proper noun Havilah, the land, according to Genesis, where there is gold.

This mysterious substance, then, is something which moves with a twisting, spiral motion through the body. It is in the human blood, for לול, khool, is the number 44, and 44 is also the number of דם, dam, "blood." It is actually present in the blood as mineral in the form of the twelve basic tissue-salts; and we may notice, in this connection, that 12 is a very important number in alchemy, which number is represented also on the Pythagorean triangle by the total length of the lines of that figure. The number 12 is also prominent in the Bible as a number signifying perfection of government.

There were twelve patriarchs from Seth to Noah and his family, and twelve from Shem to Jacob. The tribes of Israel are always reckoned as twelve, though there were actually thirteen; and the Bible gives no list of the tribes containing more than twelve. In the construction of the Temple of Solomon, an architectural symbol of the Great Work, twelve is one of the most prominent numbers.

The New Testament also contains many examples of the symbolic use of this number. The apostles were known as "The Twelve," and so important did this number seem to them that, after the death of Judas, they elected another to take his place. (Here we may note that there were really thirteen apostles, just as there were thirteen tribes. Jesus chose twelve, and this number was kept intact, after the death of Judas, by the election of another. The thirteenth apostle was St. Paul, selected by Christ himself, after the ascension of Jesus, as St. Paul affirms repeatedly.) In Tarot, says Eliphas Levi, Key 12, the Hanged Man, represents the completion of the Great Work.

Like the phoenix, the First Matter is incombustible, because its inner nature is the very essence of fire, and thus cannot be injured by fire. It is a whirling, circulating essence, which dances through our veins, moves more slowly through the lymphatic vessels, and gyrates rapidly through the nervous system. The main point to remember is that it is ready for our use in its mineral forms.

One of the most important descriptions of the First Matter is given in Geheime Figuren der Rosenkreutzer (Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians), published in Altona, Germany, in 1785 and 1788. It is one of the most precious of our printed inheritances from our predecessors. In many respects, it is almost identical with a manuscript published recently by Manly Hall, entitled D. O. M. A., CODEZ ROSAE CRUCIS. The latter was brought to the United States by a group of Pietists, who settled at Ephrata, Pennsylvania.



They were much influenced by the writings of Jacob Boehme, and both books contain material taken from the writings of that German mystic and spiritual alchemist. What follows is a rectified translation from the original German.

"The dew of heaven and the oiliness of the earth is our subject of art, or Matter. It is also neither mineral nor metal; the Pythagorean Y shows us that there are two mercurial substances in one root, Fire and Water, Ischschamaim, namely, Sulphur and Mercury extracted from the substance in which lie all metals and minerals. It is a salt dew of heaven, but a mineral and metallic dew of heaven, in which are contained all the colors of the world. This dew may be coagulated by Art into a sweet salt called Manna, by means of Arsenic. Sol is its father, Luna its mother, from these two it receives its light, life and brightness; from the Sun its fiery, and from the Moon its watery, radiance.

"We find it both coagulated and dissolved. This dew falls from above into the depths of the earth, and the subtlest portion of the earth is its body. From above come its soul and spirit, fire and light, and enter into a body of Salt. Thus it receives the strength, or substantial virtue, of both the superior and the inferior things.

"To our eyes this Mineral Dew appears in the colors of white, green, yellow, red and black. It has no other colors to the outer eyes. Though it appears corporeal to our outer eyes, to the miners in the mountains it is sometimes perceptible, subsequent to the outward appearance, as thick, watery and dripping. But that which is required by the Artists, the uninstructed man cannot know. The place of this substance in the order of Nature, whether it be mineral or metal, and from what source, is unknown and undiscoverable. The best dew is that which is coagulated like an electrum, or like transparent amber of a mixed color.

"I know not where the world may secure it; yet it is present, with all its powers, in all things. But the world treats it with contempt, and casts it away. It divides itself into two branches, white and red, from the single root, Y; and as it grows, it rises from that one root like a white and red rose of Jericho, and blooms like a lily standing in the Valley of Joshaphat.

"It is often broken prematurely by the miner, and tortured by ignorant workmen. The true Artist observes its influence, and plucks it in its ripeness, with its flowers, seeds, root, stem and branches, being enabled to take it when it is ripe by means of the vision of his inwardly opened eyes.

"This is sufficient concerning its bodily form. It is neither mineral nor metal, but the original Mother and First Matter of all minerals and metals. It is nothing else but the Lion, with his coagulated blood, and the gluten of the White Eagle."

This is one of the most important descriptions of the First Matter. We shall therefore devote considerable space to a detailed explanation of its various statements. For the convenience of the reader, each part of the explanation begins with key words which we underline.

Dew of Heaven. The first sentence in the text is a reference to Genesis 27:28:



"Therefore God gave thee the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine."

The Hebrew for "dew of heaven" is טל השמים, tal ha-shamaim. The number of this term is 434, which is the number of דלת, daleth, "door," the name of the fourth Hebrew letter. Daleth corresponds to the Qabalistic path of Luminous Intelligence, uniting Chokmah to Binah on the Tree of Life. In THE BOOK OF FORMATION, Daleth is the letter of the planet Venus, and in practical occultism, Venus is associated with the center or chakra at the well of the throat.

The corresponding Tarot Key is the Empress, which pictures a pregnant woman, or mother. She is Venus, and many alchemists call their First Matter by her name. As the link between Chokmah and Binah, she is that which joins the powers of the Father to those of the Mother.

Chokmah, the Father, is the Sphere of the Fixed Stars, or Sphere of the Zodiac; and Chokmah is also the seat of Chaiah, the life-force. The Mother, Binah, is the Sphere of Saturn. Binah is also in close correspondence to the "mysterious power" of the Yogis, the power named Maya-Shakti, held to be the root-substance of all forms. This power is the fixation, or condensation, of the active, masculine principle which is at once the light of the stars and the life-force of all creatures.

In short, the heavenly dew is light. It is the universally diffused radiance, which takes physical form as electro-magnetic energy. It is granular in structure, so that it actually falls upon the earth in drops, and the weight of its fall may be measured. In Tarot Keys 16, 18 and 19, this dew is shown falling in drops shaped like the letter Yod, or Y. Some older versions of the cards color these drops blood-red to remind the initiated of the Qabalistic correspondence between חול, khool, "sand," and דם, dam, "blood."

The number 434 is also the number of the word את-אבין, eth-abika, "the essence of thy father," and this should be considered carefully in connection with its correspondence to the number of Daleth. The intimation is that the active principle in the path of the Luminous Intelligence is actually the masculine essence proceeding from Chokmah. In Tarot, the same thing is suggested, for the Empress is by implication the wife of the Emperor, and her pregnancy is the consequence of the operation within her of his active power. Thus we may understand the "dew of heaven" to be in truth a masculine essence arousing into activity an agency outwardly feminine.

Oiliness of the Earth. The English Bible, King James Version, says "fatness," but our translation is a more accurate rendering of the Hebrew שְׁמֵנֵי הָאָרֶץ, shemeni ha-eretz. The number of this term is 696. This is the number of the Hebrew original of the phrase in Genesis 1:5, "And God called the light Day." It is also the number of the word צורה, tsoreth, "form."

In occultism, "Day" means "the manifest," and it is held that all manifestation is actually the phenomenal expression of the powers of light. All forms whatever are forms of light.



Here it may be noted that the root of the Hebrew word for "form" is also the root of the Hebrew noun צוּר, tsoor, "rock." The fundamental meaning of the root is "to press, to confine, to render compact." The idea suggested is that form is the result of the compression or condensation of energy; and the energy so compressed is the energy of light. Thus we might say that everything within range of our senses is a condensed or solidified form of light. In saying this, we say precisely what alchemists have asserted again and again.

"Oiliness of the earth" is actually a metaphor for "fertile fields." Thus the alchemical use of the term clearly refers to the principle of fertility, the active power of reproduction which is also the driving force expressed in the evolution of forms from lower to higher levels of expression.

In Hebrew, the word "oil" is שֶׁמֶן, shemen. Its number is 390, the number of זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה, zakar ve-nequbah, "male and female," of שָׁמַיִם, shamaim, "heaven," and of סְפָרִים, sepharim, "letters." The oil is identical with the power of the heavens, is manifested on every plane as male and female, and is expressed by the forces represented by the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. That is to say, the "oiliness of the earth" is actually human flesh and blood, male and female, incarnating the forces of the heavens, and expressing those forces in the various activities of the "Word made flesh, dwelling within us."

Subject of Art. These words are very important, few as they are, because they bring out the truth that the only reason for seeking to discover the First Matter is, that when we have found it, we may subject it to the modifying influence of the Hermetic Art. As this Matter exists in nature, it is incomplete. It requires treatment at the hands of a qualified human artist. Nothing has to be added to it, nor does anything have to be taken away from it. It is all we require, but even after we discover it, our personal participation is necessary in order to bring the First Matter to the state of perfection in which it is called the Philosophers' Stone and the Universal Medicine.

Neither Mineral nor Metal. These words may seem to contradict what is said by other alchemists. Basil Valentine, for example, warns his readers against seeking the First Matter in the animal kingdom, and says flatly that it is a mineral. What is the solution of this apparent disagreement?

Put it this way: The First Matter is a mineral, yet it is neither mineral nor metal. Then compare this with the saying: It is a stone, and yet no stone.

The intention is to show that, though the First Matter does express itself in mineral and metallic forms, it is not restricted to those forms. It is more than metal, more than mineral.

Valentine warns us not to seek it in the animal kingdom because there it is so heavily veiled that it is almost impossible to discover. As a matter of alchemical history, it is the simple fact that our knowledge of the First Matter owes much to the adepts' meditative contemplation of mineral forms. Crystal, and stones taken from the depths of the earth, or from the beds of streams, are particularly useful for such study.



The Pythagorean Y. In the original text, a large Y is shown. Its left-hand branch is surmounted by the alchemical symbol for Sulphur, and the symbol for alchemical Mercury is above the right-hand branch. These are the "two mercurial substances in one root, fire and water." Sulphur is fiery, and the fluid metal, Mercury, is the water aspect of the substance.

The root is said to be Y, because Y is the Roman letter equivalent to the Hebrew Yod. Yod, the letter corresponding to the sign Virgo, represents that in us whence the material used in the laboratory practice of the Great Work is derived. Ancient tradition tells us that Pythagoras employed the Y as a symbol of human life. Thus its appearance in our alchemical text is a strong hint that what we are looking for is to be sought in man himself.

Ischschamaim. This is the German transliteration of a Hebrew compound word combining the nouns **אש**, esh, "fire," and **שמים**, shamaim, "heaven." Here note that **שמים** is by Gematria equivalent to **שמן**, shemen, and to the other words explained on page 4.

Literally, Ischschamaim means "fire of heaven," that is, lightning, and some older versions of Tarot give the name "Fire of Heaven" to Key 16. This Key is said to symbolize Mars, the active principle ruling the sign Scorpio. Thus we have here another intimation that what we are seeking is the masculine creative essence designated elsewhere as the "dew of heaven."

Y, extracted from the substance in which lie all minerals and metals. As we have said, the letter Y is the same as Hebrew Yod. In the Qabalah, this letter is said to represent the Intelligence of Will, illustrated in Tarot by Key 9. There we see the dew of heaven falling from a lantern which contains as a light-source a hexagram, or six-pointed star. A hexagram is formed from a male, upright triangle of fire, interlaced with a female, inverted triangle of water.

The substance in which all metals lie, and from which they are extracted, is light. Y is said to be extracted from this substance because the most important work of alchemy has to do with the physiological functions of the human body governed by Virgo. These functions extract the alchemical materials from chyle, the Virgin's Milk. The force so extracted is light-force.

A salt, mineral and metallic dew of heaven. A slight current of electricity has a saltish, metallic taste. The heavenly dew is metallic because every metal is made from light. The text goes on to say that in this dew are contained all the colors of the world. That is to say, all colors are actually contained in pure white light. The colors of various substances indicate the chemical properties of those substances, as we see from chemical analyses made by means of the spectroscope.

Coagulated by art. Coagulation is defined as "the change from a liquid to a thickened, card-like state, not by evaporation, but by a chemical reaction; as the spontaneous coagulation of freshly drawn blood; the coagulation of milk by rennet, or acid, and the coagulation of egg albumin by heat; also the reaction itself, consisting in the change of



a soluble substance (usually albuminous) into an insoluble form."

So Webster defines the word. In Hermetic practice, coagulation is the fixation of the volatile astral light in some physical form, as, for instance, the cells of a human body. Thus the power of the dew of heaven is "turned into earth," where it becomes an integrating force. This coagulation is said to be accomplished by means of arsenic which in this text refers to the volatile principle which performs the office of female. This principle is the alchemical Moon, and it is also the alchemical Venus. Others call it their vegetable Saturn.

Thus the arsenic is precisely what is represented also by the second and third Tarot Keys, and by the twenty-first Key also. It is the feminine agency of condensation. By careful consideration of these three Keys, as representing the agency whereby the dew of heaven is coagulated, an intuitive student will be led to right understanding of this part of the text. We forbear to give a more detailed explanation because the truth of the matter is far better understood when one finds it out for himself. We have said more than enough to put a qualified student on the right track.

In our next lesson we shall continue our explanation of this old alchemical text.

Yet nothing is performed save by my power,  
And I am the real Actor in these deluded ones,  
    As truly as in any sage.  
From the fires of pain and suffering  
Kindled by their ignorance,  
In my good time shall they come forth,  
Cleansed from the dross of illusion,  
Resplendent images of my golden self.

(From the BOOK OF TOKENS by Dr. Paul Foster Case.)



# THE GREAT WORK

## Lesson Eleven

Continuing our explanation of the description of the First Matter in SECRET SYMBOLS, we come to several points which we recommend to your careful consideration.

Manna: The sweet salt is the purified body of the adept which actually has a sweet savor and odor. It is called manna because the Hebrew word מָן, being the number 90, which is also the number of מֵיָם, Mem, "water," makes this term a plain clue to what is accomplished by coagulation.

The fixation of the volatile, and the completion of the Great Work, are symbolized by the Tarot Key corresponding to Mem, Key 12, the Hanged Man. This Key symbolizes the stability of consciousness which is the outstanding characteristic of an adept. He who arrives at the stage of the Great Work symbolized by Key 12 is one who has renounced all notions of personal activity, of personal independence, of personal volition. He is firmly established in the consciousness, "Of myself I can do nothing." Yet this is what enables him to perform mighty works of power which astonish his contemporaries who do not understand the principles on which he founds his practice.

The root MN, which runs through all the languages of the Western world, comes from a Sanskrit original signifying "to measure." It is quite naturally associated, through the number 90, with one of the principal instruments of measurement. This is the square used to measure angles of 90 degrees. Adeptship is the consequence of right measurement expressed as right adjustment. Right adjustment is what leads to that perfect balance of forces implied by the alchemical dictum: "Equilibrium is the basis of the Great Work."

The number 90 is associated also with the alchemical process of sublimation, for 90 is the number of the letter Tzaddi. Tzaddi means "fish-hook." Thus it suggests the agency one employs to lift fish out of the water.

In alchemical parlance, to raise the fish out of the water is to raise the powers symbolized by the letter Nun, "the fish," from the hidden recesses of subconsciousness into the region of self-conscious awareness. This is accomplished by meditation, the function assigned by Qabalists to Tzaddi, and meditation is the basis of alchemical sublimation. By meditation are effected the subtle changes in consciousness whereby the Scorpio force corresponding to the letter Nun is raised from its natural centers in the body to become an active power in awakening other centers in the brain.

When the brain centers are thus aroused to activity, the higher self-conscious awareness of the adept begins to develop. Along with this mental development there is established a degree of control over forces at work within the body of the adept, and through this control the body itself is transmuted. It then becomes an instrument whereby modes of energy unavailable to an ordinary human being are at the adept's disposal; and it is through the conscious direction of these modes of energy that an adept performs his works of power.

Sol is its father, Luna its mother. This is a quotation from THE EMERALD TAB-



LET. Sol, or the Sun, is the solar current of Prana mentioned by the yogis. Luna is the cool current they name Rayi. Sol and Luna refer also to the two centers in the human body which are named after these two celestial lights. The sun center is the cardiac ganglion; the moon center is the pituitary body.

In the human body these two centers are the organs which specialize the First Matter for its manifestation through human personality. The sun center is that which admits the cosmic fire into the house of personality. The action of the moon center is chiefly concerned with the direction of the fluidic forms taken by solar energy as it courses through the veins, the lymphatics, and the nerve channels throughout the body.

The second paragraph of the text is very clear. Remember, it refers to the "dew of heaven," which is light. This we find coagulated into solid forms, and present also in fluidic forms of manifestation. Note particularly what the second sentence says: "This dew falls from above into the depths of the earth, and the subtlest portion of the earth is its body."

Few persons, when these words were written, had any idea that certain kinds of light penetrate deep into the earth. Few knew that light itself is the subtle substance out of which all forms are built. Even so recently as 1884, British scientists took Col. Olcott severely to task because he asserted light is the fundamental substance of the physical plane. Today we have knowledge of cosmic rays whose penetrating power is so great that they will pass through anything but thick shields of lead. Alchemists will not be slow to grasp the significance of the fact that this particular metal is required to intercept the passage of these rays.

Soul and Spirit. This passage indicates the truth that the First Matter is, like all else in the universe, vital or mental. The soul, or vital principle, is fire, and the finer spiritual principle is light. These are said to come from above to indicate the alchemical idea that physical forms are in truth condensations of superphysical forces.

White, green, yellow, red and black. The five colors here enumerated are said to be the only colors displayed by the First Matter to the "outer eyes." Compare this with what Jacob Boehme says: "These are the colours wherein all things lie: blue, red, green and yellow. The fifth, white, belongs to God; and yet has also its lustre in Nature. It is the fifth essence, a pure, unblemished child; as is to be seen in gold and silver, and in a white, clear stone that resists fire. For fire is the proof or trial of all the colours, in which none subsists but white, the same being a reflection of God's majesty. The black colour belongs not to the mystery of the wonders of creation, but is the veil or the darkness in which all things lie."

----Mysterium Pansophicum

Color is of paramount importance in the Hermetic Art, and the use of color is one of the great secrets of practical occultism. Until very recently, published color scales have been full of blinks because knowledge of color is truly magical. The Rosicrucian text we are studying is no exception. The blind it employs is the substitution of black for dark indigo, or dark blue-violet. Boehme's blind consists in the use of blue to indicate the same color, and in his remarks about black, intended to throw the uninitiated



off the track.

The colors are the same as those given in the Hindu systems, where they are attributed to the Tattvas. Following the color names in our text, the correspondences are:

White: the Apas Tattva, or water (one of the commonest names for the First Matter).

Yellow: the Prithivi Tattva, or earth:

Green: (really a greenish-blue) the Vayu Tattva, air;

Red: the Tejas Tattva, fire;

Black: (really indigo or blue-violet) the Akasha Tattva, the Quintessence, ether.

Another attribution of colors is based on a color scale associated with the Hebrew letters and the Tarot Keys. According to that scale white is the color of undifferentiated light. Yellow is Mercury, the Magician. Green is Venus, the Empress. Red is assigned to Mars, the Tower. Black, or dark blue-violet, is the color of Saturn, the World.

These color attributions are most complex, and constitute a department of occult study to which one must devote years of special work. For the purpose of this commentary, and for the practical work to be undertaken later, the two attributions here given will suffice. To avoid confusion, remember that the first, or Tattvic, attribution applies particularly to the five subtle principles of sensation which supply the elements from which every human being constructs his personal world-picture.

Corporeal to our outer eyes. Take this at face value. The First Matter does appear to the outer human vision in various physical embodiments. No matter at what we look, we are seeing some form of the manifestation of the Prima Materia. The differences in these appearances conceal from the uninitiated the truth that they are all embodiments of the One Thing.

Miners in the mountains. Michael Maier, a great alchemist, has a treatise on the "Seven Mountains," and these are the same as the seven metals and the seven chakras. The miners are students of Hermetic Science who are engaged in extracting the contents of these seven mines in the mountains.

This they do by mental practices which begin with simple acts of attention. Then the "miner" begins to practice concentration. He proceeds from this to meditation, and, by meditation, ripens his inner sensorium so that he is able to see, and otherwise sense, what is hidden behind the outward forms of things. To persons who have reached this degree of interior perception, the First Matter appears in its fluidic form as a thick, dripping, saltish (that is, alkaline) "water."

At the stage represented by the word "mining," interior contemplation is not purely abstract or formless. The miners who are perfecting the functions of the inner sensorium perceive the First Matter objectively and phenomenally. Thus we read that it "appears" to them. Other alchemical writers speak of it as being something having a



definite taste, and as being tangible. Nor should it be supposed that these interior perceptions are wholly subjective. They are just as objective as any other sensations. They are by no means peculiar to any particular observer. They are perceptions of states of "matter" which actually exist. Perhaps it may be more accurate to say that they are perceptions of rates of vibrations which are outside the range of ordinary sensation, but are just as actual, and just as independent of the presence or absence of any particular observer, as are the things which constitute the more familiar physical plane.

What the Artist requires, the uninstructed cannot know. "Unknown and undiscoverable" in the next sentence are not to be taken in their absolute sense.

Adepts know the place of this substance in the order of Nature. They know, also, "whether it be mineral or metal." Note carefully the phrasing of this last remark. Sometimes the First Matter appears as a mineral, sometimes as a metal, and again, as the text insists, as neither mineral nor metal. An adept is able to detect it under all these appearances, and knows from what One Source these various appearances proceed.

The best dew. The use of the superlative indicates the highest manifestation of the "dew," or light. It refers to the coagulation of the Matter in the form of an amber prism in the pineal gland. This prism is made by the fusing of brain sand in that organ. The fusion is effected by a current of vital electricity passing through the nervous system of a trained adept. When this prism is produced in the pineal gland, it is an actual physical stone. Thus it may be ground to powder. This is the Transparent Jewel of the yogis—the physical instrument which interrupts the high-tension vibrations of the astral light, or universal agent.

The world. All that is said in this paragraph refers to the inability of the exoteric world to penetrate into the secrets of the Great Art. Thus the author says he knows not where the world may secure the First Matter, and then goes on to say it is present, with its powers, in all things. Is not the inference clear? What the world lacks is power to perceive. The illusions of superficial appearances blind the eyes of the world. Hence the world treats the First Matter with contempt, and actually wastes enough of it every day to rid the whole race of all its miseries and sufferings.

This fourth paragraph of our text simply reiterates what we have found in other alchemical writings. It emphasizes the fact of the omnipresence of the First Matter, and makes clear a point often overlooked by beginners. The First Matter is known, in a sense, by the whole world. Otherwise it could not be held in contempt and rejected. What remains undiscovered by most persons is its wonderful potency.

It is like the sparks which fly from a cat's fur. A hundred years ago, who could have believed that the force so manifested could alter the face of the whole world, and the habits of all civilized human beings? Who could have believed this simple, familiar phenomenon to be one of the natural manifestations of a force which would make possible instantaneous communication, would seat us with diplomats at the conference tables where the destinies of nations are decided, would literally pave the highways with millions in "gold," would make possible the conquest of air, and flights across both poles?



Yet any man wiser than his contemporaries of a century ago might have said with perfect truth: "If you take a black cat into a dark closet on a cold, dry day, and rub its fur the wrong way, you shall see with your own eyes a secret fire which may be so controlled by the will and imagination of man that he may employ it to change the whole face of this globe. By this fire he may fly high in the air, and swim fathoms deep under the sea. By this same fire he may make rubies and diamonds from clay. By means of it he may see what goes on inside living human bodies, and with his very physical eyes detect hordes of living creatures invisible to us."

What roars of derision would have greeted such statements even then! Even so do most persons now deride the assertions of adepts in alchemy. Yet when one takes into account the fact that all the energy of coal, wood and petroleum was stored in the cells of plants by the action of chlorophyll, the green coloring matter of leaves, and that chlorophyll accomplishes in plants a number of chemical changes which in laboratories require furnaces heated to very high temperatures, why is it so unreasonable to think that, under some circumstances, the cells of the human body might be able to effect even greater wonders?

Is not the human organism a more highly developed instrument of the Life-power than a blade of grass? And when we remember that for thousands of years alchemical writers have been solemnly declaring, not only that transmutation is possible, but also that they themselves have accomplished it, what is so unbelievable about their statements? They say they have performed transmutations. They say anyone else who follows their methods may do what they did. And when one stops to think what would be certain to occur if their knowledge fell into wrong hands, is it so difficult to understand why they have been always so careful to veil their instructions by enigmas and symbols?

Two branches, white and red. They are said to spring from one root, Y, because the development of the energy of the First Matter within the human organism is actually rooted, as we have seen, in the assimilative functions of the intestinal tract, governed by the sign Virgo, assigned to the letter Yod.

Plate 1, in Arthur Avalon's book, THE SERPENT POWER, drawn by a Hindu artist, shows a yogi seated in meditation. From the Saturn center at the base of his spine rises the central channel of the spinal cord, named Sushumna. On either side are shown the rising currents, termed Surya (sun) and Rayi (moon). These cross one another, and remind us of the serpents on the caduceus of Hermes or Mercury.

One of these ascending spirals is red, the other white. They are the positive and negative currents of the Life-force in the body. They are the same as the "two branches" mentioned in our text.

In Lesson 12 we shall conclude this explanation of the text from SECRET SYMBOLS. With Lesson 13 we shall begin our study of Sulphur, Mercury and Salt.



# THE GREAT WORK

## Lesson Twelve

### THE FIRST MATTER (8)

With this lesson we conclude our exposition of the First Matter.

Rose and lily. As a symbolic book of the Western tradition, the Tarot has, of course, an alchemical meaning. Thus we see the Magician, who personifies Mercury, standing in a garden in which roses and lilies are growing.

Here we come upon a curious fact. In our text, the roses are associated with Jericho, and the proper noun Jericho is derived from a Hebrew root meaning "the moon." Roses are the flowers of Venus, and thus "roses of Jericho" suggest a combination of the influences of the moon and Venus, that is, of the centers of the human body which correspond to these two.

Lilies, on the other hand, are symbols of man's higher self-conscious activities. Joshaphat, or Jehoshaphat, is a word which has a definitely solar significance. Its root is שפ. The first letter is attributed by Qabalists to fire, the second to the fiery planet Mars, and the third to the fiery solar sign Leo.

But note carefully that lilies are white and roses red. Thus the fiery solar color is here associated with the Moon and Venus, while the watery lunar color is associated with a flower symbolizing the fiery powers of Mars and the sun. What is hinted at is the equilibrium of opposites which is characteristic of the practical side of the Great Work.

In human consciousness, we see this equilibrating activity at work in the relation between subconscious and self-conscious functions. The seeds of subconscious activity are self-conscious states of mind; but, on the other hand, every state of self-consciousness is qualified and colored by various elements having their origin in subconsciousness. The two act and react on each other.

Similarly, there is a sense in which the alchemical lily and rose, though different in form of expression, have fundamentally the same origin. As the text says, they spring from one root. The lily is the alchemical Mercury. The rose is the alchemical Sulphur. Note that because the substance is said to grow, its fundamental livingness is clearly intimated.

The fifth paragraph of the text indicates certain dangers. Even those who know enough to seek the First Matter by looking within, those who are called "miners," sometimes proceed clumsily in their investigations. Thus they are said to break the substance. This means wrong methods of practice which cause short-circuits in the flow of the energy forms of the Prima Materia.

Ignorant workmen "torture" the Matter by all sorts of silly attempts to force its natural growth too rapidly. The true Artist is a passive, quiet observer of the influence of the First Matter.



Ponder that word influence which means "inflowing," and think of it in connection with what has been said concerning the fluidic forms of the First Matter. The true Artist recognizes the First Matter as an influx entering the field of his personal consciousness from beyond the limits of that field. The place where he studies its growth and where he plucks it, as the text says, is within himself. He is patient enough to wait until it is ripe. Then he can gather it in its full perfection. He is able to do this because he has perfected his interior vision to perceive clearly what he is about.

The Lion: After reiterating what has been said before to the effect that the substance is neither mineral nor metal, the final paragraph goes on to say it is nothing else but the lion with his coagulated blood.

The lion is the same as the lion of Key 8 in Tarot. Alchemical books mention three lions--the Green Lion, the Red Lion, and the Old Lion. The Green Lion is the substance in its unripe or natural state before it has been perfected by the processes of Hermetic Art. The Red Lion is the result of the confection of the Green Lion with animated Mercury, say the alchemists, meaning that the alchemical male, or Sun (the solar energy from which all human physical forces are derived) has been mixed with thought-force which is the animated Mercury. That is, the Red Lion is the astral light in its physical manifestations after these have been modified by what Tarot represents as Key 1, the Magician, who symbolizes Mercury.

The blood of the Red Lion is actually human blood as we are told repeatedly by the sages. Yet it is different from ordinary blood. It is more highly energized. It contains subtle elements absent from ordinary blood. These are introduced at two points: 1. at the point where the substances in the chyle, or Virgin's Milk, are introduced into the blood stream by the action of the lacteals in the small intestine; 2. in the lungs where the blood is aerated, and where subtle forces in the atmosphere are combined with those taken from the Virgin's Milk. Unless the subtle elements derived from food are in the blood stream as it passes through the lungs, the other subtle elements taken from the atmosphere cannot be added. (Here note that, according to astrology, the function of the lungs is under the rulership of Mercury.) Unless the blood be charged with substances taken from food, there is no base to hold, or fix, the volatile essences taken from air.

Digestion and assimilation volatilize the fixed, or earthy, substance of food. The aeration of the blood in the lungs, under the conditions we have just described, fixes the volatile elements taken from the atmosphere.

Various names have been given by alchemists to these subtle elements. None of the names are adequate. In time to come they may be recognized by exoteric chemistry, and will then receive designations which will serve to identify them. Names, however, are not important. The point is that by the processes of Hermetic Art we may avail ourselves of the presence of these subtle elements in food and air.

The coagulated blood of the Red Lion is human cell tissue impregnated with these substances. Most of it is nerve tissue, but some of it is located in the endocrines, and



some of it is in the blood itself. As this tissue is built into the actual structure of the body, the alchemist himself becomes a new creature. Thus he has a physical instrument which can utilize and differentiate the astral light into forms of force outside the ken of ordinary humanity, just as the chlorophyll in plants accomplishes in them marvels of chemistry which man is unable to achieve in his laboratories.

Gluten of the eagle. The eagle, says Dr. Waite, is a name which "has been applied by the philosophers to the Mercury after sublimation, firstly on account of its volatility, and secondly because even as the eagle devours other birds, so does the Mercury of the sages destroy, consume, and reduce even gold itself to the first matter."

This eagle is also a symbol for the zodiacal sign Scorpio after the reproductive energy represented by that sign, and by the letter Nun in the Hebrew alphabet, has been raised to its highest potency. The yogis call the gluten of the eagle Ojas, a word which means literally, "the illuminating or bright." Of it Swami Vivekananda wrote:

"The yogis claim that of all the energies the human body comprises the highest is what they call 'Ojas.' Now this Ojas is stored up in the brain, and the more Ojas is in a man's head, the more powerful he is, the more intellectual, the more spiritually strong will that man be. This is the action of Ojas. One man may speak beautiful language and beautiful thoughts, but they do not impress people; another man speaks neither beautiful language nor beautiful thoughts, yet his words charm. This is the power of Ojas coming out. Every movement coming from him will be powerful.

"Now in all mankind there is more or less of this Ojas stored up. And all the forces that are working in the body, in their highest form, become Ojas. You must remember that it is only a question of transformation. The same force which is working outside, as electricity or magnetism, will become changed into inner force; the same forces that are working as muscular energy will be changed into Ojas. The Yogis say that that part of the human energy which is expressed as sex energy, as sexual functions, and so on, when checked and controlled, easily becomes changed into Ojas, and as this lowest centre is the one which guides all these functions, therefore the Yogi pays particular attention to that centre. He tries to take up all this sexual energy and convert it into Ojas."

Some of the more recent discoveries in the field of endocrinology give abundant support to this doctrine of the yogis. Since the previous edition of these lessons was written, chemical production of synthetic sex hormones, both male and female, and carefully checked experiments, have demonstrated the fundamental accuracy of this old doctrine about Ojas.

There is no question that continence does increase the energy of those who practice it. This has nothing to do with morals. There are men of great power, the public record of whose acts demonstrates them to be violently anti-social. Yet they are known to be men who utilize the principle of continence. All the world knows they have tremendous influence over the masses who follow them. We are dealing here with nothing more than a question of the increase of energy. By unscrupulous men this energy may



be, and is, put to evil and destructive uses which work great harm.

When continence is carried to extremes, and is complicated by subconscious complexes having to do with sex, the changes which are brought about in the psychology of the person who adopts this extreme celibate mode of life are such as to bring him often to the verge of insanity. Sometimes, indeed, he goes quite insane. Usually his insanity is some form of paranoia accompanied by delusions of grandeur and the characteristic fears which go with these delusions. One suspects this may be the explanation of the behavior of certain notorious tyrants of other days. Almost certainly it had something to do with the dreadful power and influence of Adolf Hitler. We have seen the same thing at work in several recent examples of the mental and physical disintegration of several leaders of spiritual and occult movements. It is always dangerous to be an extremist, especially in this respect.

The text we are explaining contains nothing more concerning the First Matter, but in the original German is rounded off by a piece of doggerel which adds nothing to the meaning. One point only is included in this verse which may be worth noting. In substance it says: "If you discover it, be silent and keep it sacred."

When one makes this great discovery, the natural impulse is to reveal it to others, but the experience of ages has shown this to be a mistaken impulse. What one knows, after making the discovery, seems so perfectly plain, so crystal clear, that there is always a great temptation to become a missionary.

Actually, however, the knowledge is incommunicable. However clear it may be to those who possess it (and we add our testimony to that of other writers who say no knowledge is clearer, that none has a greater degree of certitude), the fact remains that ordinary human language cannot possibly convey this knowledge from the mind of one having it to the mind of a person who is unprepared to receive it.

In our attempts to make the discovery, we may be assisted by the counsel of others. Each of us, notwithstanding, must make the actual discovery alone. Buddha had no companions under the Bo-tree. Moses and Jesus learned their final lesson in solitude under the stars. St. Paul hid himself for three years in the Arabian desert.

This knowledge has its price, and the price includes the personal effort of the seeker. Those who know are able to communicate the fact of their knowledge to one another. They signal it from age to age, using always the same code of enigmatic words and curious symbols. But they never tell the Great Secret because it never can be told. And, in writing of certain lesser secrets which are communicable, they always warn their pupils: "Cast not your pearls before swine, lest they turn and rend you."

Some years ago, when we gave out some instruction on alchemy, we soon had evidence that it was accomplishing its object. One student wrote that we were doing everything possible to lead others to the vision of what he called the "Eternal Sparkle." By his very choice of words he showed that he had glimpsed the Thing Itself.

Another said: "I rejoice to tell you that I have it now. I have seen it in wonderful



flashes many times, but now I have 'grasped it with my mind' and have faith that I can hold it. I didn't get it all from the alchemical quotations. In fact I had been reaching out for it all through my Tarot studies, but--The Hermit was the lesson I got the least out of in the whole course! Last night, after reading about the First Matter, I 'saw men like trees walking: 'and I said, 'Several of these quotations are in The Hermit. Perhaps he will throw more light on the mystery.'

"So I re-read The Hermit--devoured it, I should say--hungrily. And there it was, all so plain and clear; so intelligible; so exactly what I had been groping for in vain. And now--I know that whereas I was blind when I studied that lesson nearly a year ago--now I see."

You will notice that the letter just quoted speaks of "reaching out for it," and of "groping for it." It intimates that the writer also was hungry for illumination. Compare this with Boehme's words:

"I am not a master of literature nor of arts, such as belong to this world, but a foolish and simpleminded man. I have never desired to learn any sciences, but from early youth I strove after the salvation of my soul, and thought how I might inherit or possess the kingdom of heaven. Now while I was wrestling and battling, being aided by God, a wonderful light arose within my soul. It was a light entirely foreign to my unruly nature, but in it I recognized the true nature of God and man, and the relation existing between them, a thing which heretofore I had never understood, and for which I never would have sought."

This discovery comes about through the awakening of the function of the Third Eye, as it is often called. This is the brain center which we also call the "Adytum," or "Secret Place of the Most High." In Qabalistic books the name center is frequently termed "Zion." Its bodily correspondence is the pineal gland. Its function is expressed in direct knowledge of the fiery essence hidden behind the veils of physical name and form.

The awakening comes to those who are hungry for it, to those who wrestle and battle for it, to those who will not be content with anything less. But it does not come during our moments of stress and struggle. The hunger, the wrestling and the battling--these are necessary, but they are also only preparatory. We read, therefore, in LIGHT ON THE PATH:

"Look for the flower to bloom in the silence that follows the storm; not till then.

"It shall grow, it will shoot up, it will make branches and leaves and form buds, while the storm lasts. But not till the whole personality of the man is dissolved and melted--not until it is held by the divine fragment which has created it, as a mere subject for grave experiment and experience--not until the whole nature has yielded and become subject unto its higher self, can the bloom open. Then will come a calm such as comes in a tropical country after a heavy rain, when nature works so swiftly that one may see her action. Such a calm will come to the harassed spirit. And in the deep silence the mysterious event will occur which will prove that the way has been found.



Call it by what name you will, it is a voice that speaks where there is none to speak--- it is a messenger that comes, a messenger without form or substance; or it is the flower of the soul that has opened. It cannot be described by any metaphor."

The next group of lessons will deal with the three alchemical principles, Sulphur, Mercury and Salt.

They err who speak of my changelessness in essence  
As if it were fixity in operation.  
That which changeth not is mine own nature,  
But this includeth the possibility  
Of infinite diversity in ways and works.

For the uninstructed this is a stumbling block.  
Confused by words of double meaning,  
They perceive not that this, mine immutable nature,  
Is an essence whose first ground is Life,

And not mere Being.  
Thou knowest me not, O Israel,  
If thou regardest me only as "He who IS."  
They know me indeed who know  
That I am "He who LIVETH."

I am Life itself,  
And without Mind there is no Life.  
I am the essence of Mind,  
And the essence of mind is Will.  
Of my Will all created wills are but reflections,  
And the essence of that Will ———  
What is it but Desire?

(From the BOOK OF TOKENS by Dr. Paul Foster Case.)



# THE GREAT WORK

## THE THREE PRINCIPLES (1)

### Lesson Thirteen

From other lessons of this course, you have learned that there is a close parallel between the yoga doctrine concerning the three gunas, or qualities, and the alchemical teaching about the three principles. It has been explained that the Sattva-guna corresponds to alchemical Mercury, the Rajasguna to alchemical Sulphur, and the Tamasguna to alchemical Salt. We now proceed to a further exposition of the natures of these three.

Sattva means literally, "illumination material," or the substance of enlightenment. In his translation of the BHAGAVAD-GITA, Charles Johnston calls it Substance, and renders the sixth verse of the fourteenth chapter as follows:

"Substance, luminous through its stainlessness, and free from sorrow, binds by the bond of pleasure and the bond of knowledge."

The eleventh verse of the same chapter he translates thus:

"When light shines in at all the doors of this dwelling, when wisdom shines, then let him know that Substance has prevailed."

And again:

"The fruit of works well done is stainless, belonging to Substance . . . From Substance is born wisdom . . . Those who dwell in Substance go upward."

Johnston's translation of Sattva as "Substance" is valuable because he was a thorough Sanskritist, and we may be sure he did not choose this English rendering without weighing it carefully. Thus it becomes evident that Sattva is very similar to what we have been considering under the designation "First Matter." This, you will recall, is termed Mercury by Philalethes, Albertus Magnus, Raymond Lully, and many other alchemists. We may conclude, therefore, that there is no essential difference between the First Matter and the first of the three principles.

Whether we call the first principle Sattva or Mercury, we are to think of it as being a luminous substance. Thus we may understand why the Hebrew alchemical treatise Aesch Metzarept (The Purifying Fire) attributes the principle Mercury to Kether, the Crown, the highest of the ten aspects of the Life-power, at the top of the Tree of Life.

This sphere at the top of the diagram of the Tree is often shown as being brilliant white. It is called the Crown because it is the supreme or ruling principle as you have learned from the three preceding courses in our curriculum. To Kether the Qabalists give many names which clearly indicate its identity with Sattva, the "illumination material." Among them are: אור סופיא, aur mopeleh, Hidden Light; אור פשוט, aur peshut, Simplest Light; אור פנימי, aur penimi, Inner Light.

Qabalists declare that Limitless Light concentrates itself in Kether and sets up a whirling motion which is the beginning of manifestation. It is also the primary motive power through the entire duration of every cycle of manifestation. The initial activity



of the Life-power is by them represented as being the selection of a point at which to begin. This point they name נקודה ראשונה, nequdah rashunah, the Primordial Point, and give this name also to Kether. Again, like the First Matter, Kether is called the "Existence of Existences," and the "Concealed of the Concealed."

These old Qabalistic doctrines are not philosophical abstractions, not the results of mere speculation. Like yoga and alchemy, the Hebrew Wisdom is founded on human experience, and one feature of this is immediate perception of a self-luminous substance which is the root of all things. This self-sustaining subsistence is what enters into all forms whatsoever. Qabalists, yogis and alchemists perceive it as being essentially identical with the energy which produces the various physical manifestations of light.

To the present state of this subsistent light Qabalists give the name Yekhidah, and to the same light alchemists give the name Mercury.

In THE SERPENT POWER, page 53, Sir John Woodroffe (Arthur Avalon) says:

"The first is Sattvaguna, the function of which, relative to the other gunas, is to reveal consciousness. The greater the presence of power of Sattvaguna, the greater the approach to the condition of Pure Consciousness . . . The truly Sattvik man is a divine man, his temperament being called in the Tantras Divyabhava. Through Sattva-gunas passage is made to Sat, which is Chit, or Pure Consciousness, by the Siddhayogi, who is identified with Pure Spirit."

Hindu authorities aver also that Prakriti or Shakti (First Matter) in its aspect of Perfect Unity is the divine perception which is pure Sattva and an attribute of Ishvara, the Supreme Self. By Vivekananda, Ishvara is defined as: "The Supreme Ruler; the highest possible conception, through reason, of the Absolute, which is beyond all thought." This conception lies behind the Qabalistic term Yekhidah, the Indivisible, attributed to Kether. This term designates the Supreme Ruler, the One Identity.

The Sattvaguna predominates also in what Hindus call Buddhi, the principle of determination concerning which it is written that Buddhi, the basis of all cognition, sensation and resolves, is the charioteer; Manas, the deliberative faculty of the mind, the reins; and the senses, the horses. That is to say, Buddhi is the driver of the car shown in the seventh Key of Tarot, and, in this sense, Buddhi is indistinguishable from Ishvara or from Yekhidah, the universal SELF.

What we must keep continually before us in this connection, is the fact that this One Self is itself identical with the Limitless Light concentrated in the Small Point of original manifestation. The Self is a point of expression for a dynamic energy, a point through which that energy passes continually.

The tendency of our minds is to think of the Self, or I AM, as being something static or fixed, but Ageless Wisdom declares the opposite. It may help us to recall the geometrical definition of a point--"simple location, without length, breadth, or thickness." That is, nothing whatever which has size, shape, or form.



This conception is beyond our mental grasp. Thus we are told that the residuum after all grasping is at an end is the true Self. True knowledge causes even this Self to vanish. It is swallowed up in the infinity of the Limitless Light, the radiant energy which Qabalists term Ain Suph Aur, and Hindus designate as Mulaprakriti, the root-matter.

We have just said that Sattva, or alchemical Mercury, is the attribute of Ishvara or Yekhidah. The numeral value of יחידה, Yekhidah, is 37, which we have seen to be the number of degrees in the angle which determines the relation of the hypotenuse of a Pythagorean triangle to its base. Thus the number 37 signifies the principle which maintains the relation of the evolving forms of the Life-power to Isis, or Mother Nature. The Supreme SELF, Yekhidah, is this principle.

With this in mind, let us analyze the geometrical properties of the Mercury symbol. At the top is a semicircle. In the center is a circle. Underneath the circle is an equal-armed cross.

In occult geometry, any circle corresponds to the number 22, because of the approximate pi-proportion which makes the circumference of a circle  $3 \frac{1}{7}$  times its diameter. Thus the smallest whole number which can represent a diameter is 7, corresponding to a circumference of 22. The value of a semicircle as 11 is derived in the same way. And since the days of Pythagoras, any straight line has been the geometrical symbol for the number 2, so that the two straight lines of an equal-armed cross stand for the number 4. Thus the numbers represented by the parts of the Mercury symbol are: 11 (semicircle), 22 (circle), and 4 (cross), and their total is 37.

After all this, it should be evident that the philosophers chose "Mercury" for the name of their first principle because of its mythological associations. Mercury, or Hermes, was the messenger of the gods. It was his office to reveal the divine will, just as it is the office of Sattvaguna to reveal consciousness. Mercury invented all the arts and sciences, and so corresponds to the determinative faculty, Buddhi. He was patron of astrology, magic and alchemy, and every one of these occult arts, rightly understood, has for its object the maintenance of the true relation of evolving form to the fundamental characteristics of Mother Isis, or Nature.

In the forms of life below man, this determinative power is exercised upon the vehicles of life without their conscious cooperation. In man there is conscious awareness of what is going on. This leads to his voluntary participation in the process. The result of this is the perfect unification of man's consciousness with that of the Originating Principle.

This is graphically illustrated by the diagram shown in Lesson 9. In that figure, the first of the three divisions of the line attributed to Osiris corresponds to Mercury. This is because the first differentiation of the One Life-power is this same principle of pure knowing, Sattva, or Mercury.

This principle is the aspect of the Life-power designated in our courses by the term superconsciousness. Superconsciousness is the plane of life-activity above the level



of human self-conscious knowing; but when we call it a plane, we must be careful not to fall into the error of supposing it to be static. It is a field of intense activity, a sphere of vibratory movement, a region of energy beyond the limits of our ordinary awareness. This energy is the true Mercury of the Sages, one with the First Matter.

It is the power which flows down from above into the uplifted wand of the Magician. A power invisible and intangible, but nevertheless a real power. A power which becomes manifest on the physical plane as light, the Great Magical Agent concerning which Eliphas Levi wrote at length. A power hidden behind the manifold veils of name and form. A power perfectly simple and indivisible in itself, but seemingly divided into an intricate criss-cross of complex manifestations. A power that is correctly described as Inner Light, which may become actually visible to the awakened inner sensorium of the alchemist as he progresses toward the completion of the Great Work. Such is the first principle of alchemy, such the Mercury of the Sages.

In Lesson 14 we shall explain the second principle, alchemical Sulphur.

From my substance all things derive their substance,  
And all that hath form  
Is built from my four-fold elemental manifestation.  
Four are the subtle principles  
Which the wise conceal from the uninitiate by the  
names:  
FIRE, WATER, AIR, and EARTH.

In endless variety of mixture and proportion,  
Directed by my Will,  
These mingle together for the production of forms.  
They are transmutations of a single essence,  
And from their mingling are brought forth all things.

(From the BOOK OF TOKENS by Dr. Paul Foster Case.)



# THE GREAT WORK

## THE THREE PRINCIPLES (2)

### Lesson Fourteen

Rajas, the second of the three qualities, is rendered "force" by Charles Johnston. In his translation of the fourteenth chapter of THE BHAGAVAD-GITA, we read:

"Force, of the essence of desire, engendering thirst and attachment, binds the lord of the body by the bonds of works . . . Desire of possessions, activity, the undertaking of works, restlessness, longing, these are born when Force prevails . . . The fruit of Force is pain . . . In the midst stand those who dwell in Force."

Arthur Avalon writes: "The function of Rajasguna is to make active--that is, it works on Tamas to suppress Sattva, or on Sattva to suppress Tamas."

Compare this with the words of Jacob Boehme:

"The wise heathen have in some measure understood this ground, for they say, that in Sulphur, Mercury, and Sal, all things in this world consist; wherein they have not looked upon the matter only, but upon the spirit; for the ground of it consisteth not in gross salt, quick-silver, and brimstone, they mean not so, but they mean the spirit of such properties; in that, everything indeed consisteth, whatsoever liveth and groweth and hath being in this world, whether it be spiritual or material.

"For they understand by Salt the sharp magnetical desire of nature; and by Mercury they mean the motion and separation of nature, by which everything is marked with its own image and shape; and by Sulphur they mean the sensible, desiring, and growing life."

The Rajasguna is active in that manifestation of the Life-power which Hindus call Ahankara, the "I-maker." Ahankara is the realization of oneself as a person. It is the self-consciousness of worldly experience in which one thinks of oneself as a particular person who stands in relation to the objects of his experience. It is the power which Johnston calls "self-reference."

According to alchemical doctrine, the office of the principle named Sulphur is to swallow and transmute Mercury. This idea is presented under many curious veils of symbolism, but we need not enter into an elaborate examination of these. The meaning should be clear in the light of what has just been written. The alchemical Sulphur is the active principle of self-consciousness, and the office of this principle is to bring down the superconscious energy (Mercury) so that it may be assimilated in the region or plane of self-conscious awareness.

In Tarot, therefore, the invisible force which is drawn down from above by the Magician is Mercury, and Sulphur is represented by his red robe, typifying action. Superconscious energy is the true food of self-consciousness, which differentiates the Mercury so received into various forms of self-conscious activity. Thus the Hindus tell us that in the operation of Ahankara (self-consciousness), Buddhi, in which the Sattva quality (Mercury) prevails, is the actual working principle.



In THE BOOK OF PURIFYING FIRE, the alchemical Sulphur is attributed to Chokmah, Wisdom, the second aspect of the Life-power. Chokmah is understood to signify practical as well as theoretical wisdom. It is not merely the distilled essence of experience. It is power to do, power to make active, and thus corresponds exactly to the nature of Sulphur and of the Rajasguna.

In human personality, Chokmah is said to be the seat of the vital force. This vital force is the "spiritual seed of Sulphur," mentioned by Ripley and others among the alchemists.

They declare also that this seed is their secret fire. This corresponds to the Qabalistic doctrine that Chokmah is the Root of Fire. It agrees also with the statement of the alchemist El-Habib, who says that in the tincture, Sulphur is the part of fire.

The noun tincture, in its alchemical sense, means "mixture of colors." It is a fairly obvious figure of speech for human personality. The tincture is contained in the philosophical egg. This is the human aura, seen by those who have awakened the inner sensorium as an ovoid, transparent body, in which there is a continual play of colors. This philosophical egg, containing Mercury, Sulphur and Salt, is the "vessel of glass" in which the matter of the work is brought to perfection.

Raymond Lully says the true philosophical Sulphur is not to be sensibly distinguished from the true Mercury. The same writer insists also that the living Sulphur has no connection with the ordinary substance bearing the same name. It is a metaphysical substance.

Again, in various alchemical writings, one reads that the Sulphur of Sol is the Soul of Gold, that the Sulphur of Luna is the Soul of Silver, and so with other metals. The key to the true meaning is in Spenser's lines:

"For of the soule the bodie forme doth take;  
"For soule is forme, and doth the bodie make."

That is to say, Sulphur is the power of formation, inherent in the life-force. Here, again, we have confirmation from Qabalah, for Chokmah, to which Sulphur is attributed, is said also to be כחמה, kachmah, the power of formation.

The Universal Sulphur is said, therefore, to be the light from which all particular sulphurs proceed. Thus Boehme says:

"All life and motion, with understanding, reason, and senses, both in animals and vegetables, consist originally in Sulphur, viz., in nature's desire . . . Man, and every life else, as to the kingdom of this world, was created and generated out of the outward Sulphur; man out of the inward Sulphur, and the outward creature only out of the outward . . . Whatever grows, lives, and moves in this world, consists in Sulphur, and the Salt is the corporeal being of Mercury's hunger."

This passage, condensed from SIGNATURA RERUM, shows that alchemical Sulphur is the middle principle of which the life is alchemical Mercury, and the body, alchemi-



cal Salt. Thus Sulphur is assigned to the second of the three divisions of the Osiris line in the Pythagorean triangle. Mercury is the spirit, and Sulphur is the soul, in all forms of the Life-power's manifestation.

Hence Mercury is the same as what the Greeks termed *pneuma*, and Sulphur is what they named *psyche*. As the yogis declare, this principle stands in the midst as the quality which may act on Sattva to suppress Tamas, or upon Tamas to suppress Sattva. It may operate in either direction.

In the natural man, it feeds on Tamas and draws its sustenance from the bodily sensations which are below it in the scale of consciousness. It is then drawn into the conflicts of sensation which are called the brimstone fires of hell.

In the spiritual, or pneumatic, man who has entered upon the performance of the Great Work, this principle opens itself to the influx of the descending power of the Sattva quality, or Mercury, which is its proper food. This leads to the regeneration which is the object of the Great Work. Hence we read in Boehme that Sulphur is the womb into which we must enter if we would be new born.

Sulphur, active in the desiring and growing life of self-consciousness, works either for the gratification of the senses, or for man's release from their bondage. Sulphur is what shall lead us to higher levels. It is the transforming power symbolized by the Magician in his red robe.

The Tarot Keys make this clear. In our explanations of these Keys, we have pointed out that Key 4, the Emperor, represents the same essential power as the Magician. The Emperor is the Magician, after the Magician's mating with the High Priestess has transformed her into the Empress. In all older Tarot packs, as in the B.O.T.A. version, the composition of the picture of the Emperor is based on the symbol for Sulphur, a triangle surmounting a cross. The same figure is also the basis of the design of Key 7, except that a square, forming the body of the chariot, encloses the cross.

There are two ways in which to analyze the Sulphur symbol. One is to consider each of its five lines as representing the number 2. Then the whole symbol corresponds to the number 10. The other is to think of the symbol as a triangle (3) surmounting a cross (4). Then the number represented by the symbol will be 7.

Every student familiar with the esoteric meaning of numbers will see that there is a close correspondence between 10 and 7. In Tarot, 7 and 10 are the third and fourth terms of the series of Keys which begins with Key 1, and includes Keys 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16 and 19. Every Key in this series has some reference to alchemical Sulphur.

Key 1 is Sulphur as the transforming power active in self-consciousness. Key 4 shows Sulphur as the martial, regulative power of the Constituting Intelligence. Key 10 represents it as the whirling motion which makes all things active, the fly-wheel of nature's mechanism. Key 13 shows Sulphur as the power of growth associated with the meanings of the letter Nun and presents it symbolically as the power which produces the outward phenomena of death and change. Key 16 shows it as a lightning-flash, destroying structures of false knowledge. Key 19 is a symbol of the regeneration effected by the Great



Work, a symbol of the making of philosophical Gold or Sol; and, in connection with this Key of Tarot, we may remember that Bernard of Trevisan says: "Gold (Sol) is nothing but quicksilver congealed by its Sulphur."

The Hebrew noun for Sulphur is **נפריח**, *gofreeth*. The letters composing it are **נ**, referred to the Moon and Silver, **פ**, referred to Mars and Iron, **ר**, referred to the Sun and Gold, **י**, referred to the operation of Mercury in Virgo, and **ח**, referred to Saturn and Lead.

The Moon center is the pituitary body. The Mars center is that which governs the reproductive functions. The Sun center is directly connected with the action of the heart, with the function of the spleen, and with the admission of radiant energy into the sphere of personality. The operation of Mercury in Virgo has been explained in our lessons on the First Matter. The Saturn center is that in which the Kundalini force, or secret fire, is coiled. This center also controls excretion and is active in the orgasm which is the climax of the sex function.

Modern knowledge of the functions of the endocrine glands indicates that the parts of the body represented by the letters of **נפריח** are actually those which are fundamental in the activities of human personality. All our work is accomplished by the forces operating in and through these centers.

We do not go so far as to say the Hebrew name for Sulphur was intentionally spelled this way in order to preserve ancient knowledge of these centers and their functions, though we do know that modern "discoveries" in this field of science are but revivals of what has been known before. All we assert is that, whether by intention or chance, the letters of **נפריח** do actually correspond to the parts of the human body which are actively concerned in the Great Work. In this connection the student should remember that the uplifted wand in the Magician's hand is a phallic symbol which has been explained in our lessons on Tarot as typifying the sublimation and modification of the forces which ordinarily find expression in physical reproduction.

Self-consciousness (Sulphur), on account of its identification with the desire nature, is inseparable from those basic activities of the human organism which have to do with the perpetuation of the species. It is an open secret that the alchemical process utilizes the nerve-force which energizes the organs of reproduction, and diverts its activity to effect chemical and structural changes in the alchemist's own body. The Kundalini force, or serpent power, coiled in the Saturn center at the base of the spine, is the electric fire which fuses the brain-sand in the pineal gland into the crystal Stone of the Wise.

Subtle modifications of the blood, by the internal secretions of the gonads, under the rulership of the Mars center, and of the pituitary body, or Moon center, are a necessary part of the Operation of the Sun. So is the charging of the blood stream with certain substances derived from food, in the region of the body corresponding to the work of Mercury in Virgo. Indispensable to success in this operation, also, is the function of the Sun center controlling heart and spleen. All these activities are manifestations of Sulphur, or the Rajasguna, when it works on Mercury (Sattva) to suppress the operation of Salt (Tamas).



In our next lesson we shall consider the use and functions of Salt, or the Tamasguna. Superficial knowledge of Oriental texts has led many to embrace the erroneous opinion that the work of yoga aims at eliminating the Tamasguna altogether.

Perhaps a hint from the words of Jesus may prepare you to understand this better. He is reported as saying, "Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt hath lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted?"

Captious critics of the New Testament are fond of pointing out that salt never really loses its savor. But when one knows how salt was procured and transported in Jesus' day, it is easy to understand that impurities and adulterations might make commercial salt of little value either as a condiment or as a preservative.

What the yoga and alchemical practices aim to accomplish is the purification of the third principle, not its elimination. We shall consider this in our next lesson.

By balancing opposites with exactitude unfailing,  
I bring mastery of all conditions and circumstances  
To him who seeketh faithfully to do my will.  
Such an one will master days, and seas, and times,  
Because through him my rulership of everything  
Shall find free outlet.

(From the BOOK OF TOKENS by Dr. Paul Foster Case.)



THE GREAT WORK  
THE THREE PRINCIPLES (3)

Lesson Fifteen

Johnston translates Tamas as "Darkness." In his version of the fourteenth chapter of the GITA we read:

"Darkness, born of unwisdom is known to be the deluder of all who are embodied; it binds through heedlessness, indolence and sleep . . . Darkness, enwrapping wisdom, causes attachment through sloth . . . Obscurity, inactivity, sloth, delusion, these are born when Darkness prevails. . . The fruit of Darkness is unwisdom . . . Those who dwell in Darkness go downward, under the sway of the lowest powers."

Hence Boehme, who calls this principle Sal or Salt, declares it to be the intense magnetical desire of nature which draws the life-force down into itself. Nature should here be understood as being what is symbolized by the base line of the Pythagorean triangle into which the stream of cosmic energy, represented by the vertical line corresponding to Osiris, descends to be involved in the forms of the four elements represented by the four divisions of the Isis line. Observe that the four elements, fire, water, air and earth, are the same as the Hindu Tattvas, Tejas, Apas, Vayu and Prithivi. They are subtle principles of sensation. Fundamentally, the elements are the ways in which the One Thing affects our senses.

Boehme says also:

"Whatever grows, lives, and moves in this world consists in Sulphur, and Mercury is the life in Sulphur, and the Salt is the corporeal being of Mercury's hunger, though the body is manifold. The outward world's desire is in Sulphur, Mercury and Sal; of such an essence it is in itself, viz., a hunger after itself, and is its own satisfying; for the Sul desires Phur, and Phur desires Mercury, and both of these desire Sal; for Sal is their son which they hatch in their desire, and afterwards becomes their habitation and also food. Each desire desires only the essentiality of Salt according to its property; for Salt is diverse; one part is sharpness of cold, and one part sharpness of heat; also one part brimstone; and one part salniter from Mercury."

Boehme therefore divides Sulphur into a twofold nature. He represents its union with what is above it (Mercury, Sattva) by the syllable Sul, which he calls the "oil of nature, wherein the life burns, and everything grows." Its union with what is below it (Salt, Tamas) he represents by the syllable Phur, as being the desire of the free lubet. In translating Boehme, William Law uses the word lubet for the German lust, because of evil connotations of "lust" in English. Lubet is the same as the libido of analytical psychology.

Boehme, when he says that Salt is one part of brimstone (Sulphur) and one part salniter from Mercury, clearly indicates his knowledge that the lowest of the three principles partakes of the qualities of those above it. Observe, too, that he recognizes a pair of opposites in Salt: sharpness, or intensity, of heat, and sharpness of cold, viz., extremes of expansion (heat) and contraction (cold).

Ordinary salt retards the chemical processes which cause decay. Hence it is used



to preserve meat. This is what is regarded as the main characteristic of alchemical Salt. This property of the Salt of the Philosophers is due to the quality of inertia attributed to Tamas by the Hindu sages who also associate this quality with the idea of embodiment.

Thus Paracelsus writes:

"Hermes truly said that all the seven metals were made and compounded of three substances, and in like manner also tinctures and the Philosophers' Stone. (By "tinctures" he here means "bodies.") These three substances he names, Spirit, Soul, and Body . . . Now, in order that these three distinct substances may be rightly understood, namely, Spirit, Soul, and Body, it should be known that they signify nothing else than the three principles, Mercury, Sulphur, and Salt, from which all the seven metals are generated. For Mercury is the Spirit, Sulphur is the Soul, and Salt is the Body. The metal between the Spirit and the Body, concerning which Hermes speaks, is the Soul, which indeed is Sulphur. It unites these two contraries, the Body and the Spirit, and changes them into one essence."

Paracelsus declares also that the properties of Salt are compaction, congelation, and unification. And he writes: "Know that Salt is a balsam, and conserves Mercury so that its properties shall not putrefy or decay."

In the book AESCH METZAREPH (Purifying Fire), the principle Salt is attributed to the third aspect of the Life-power, Binah, Understanding. On the Tree of Life, Binah is sometimes represented as a black circle, the color corresponding to the idea of Salt or Tamas as the principle of Darkness.

Binah is the Great Mother, or dark womb of manifestation. Binah is called also the Great Sea, and the water of that sea is characterized by its saltiness. This aspect of the Life-power, throughout Qabalistic philosophy, is clearly indicated to be the source of all embodiment.

Binah is the diversifying power which produces the appearance of the multiplication of bodies throughout the universe. Its real action is to veil consciousness and thus to produce world-experience. Thus Binah corresponds exactly to what Hindus call Shakti (Power) in its aspect of Maya. Concerning this, Arthur Avalon writes:

"Maya Shakti is that which seemingly makes the whole (Purna) into the not-whole (Apurna), the infinite into the finite, the formless into forms, and the like. It is a power which thus cuts down, veils and negates. Negates what? Perfect consciousness."

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He says also: "The general action of Shakti is to veil consciousness . . . In fact, like the materia prima of the Thomistic philosophy, it is a finitizing principle. To all seeming, it finitizes and makes form in the infinite formless Consciousness. So do all the gunas. But one does it less and another more. The function of Tamasguna is to suppress and veil consciousness . . . The lower descent is made in the scale of nature, the more Tamasguna prevails, as in so-called 'brute substance,' which has been supposed to be altogether inert."



Now this is precisely the import of the essential Qabalistic teaching about Binah. She is the lowest, or outermost, of the Three Supernals among the ten Sephiroth. She is the same as the Thomistic finitizing materia prima. She is the Great Mother described in all Qabalistic writings in just such terms as Hindus always apply to Shakti as Maya. Even the English translation of the noun Binah—"Understanding"—means by derivation exactly the same as substance—"that which stands under."

This is true even though Binah is said to be the seat of the Higher Soul, Neshamah, through which one receives the interior teaching by the operation of intuition. The point is that even the highest instruction is yet a veil for the Absolute Reality. Whether it come from within or without, teaching is but a preliminary to true illumination. As Eliphas Levi says, revelation is really re-veiling. Hence the power of the Tamasguna may be discerned even at these high levels since there can be no instruction without form, no communication without the dualism of speaker and hearer, and thus no intuition without some tinge of Avidya, unwisdom.

The Hindu point of view, which often regards the appearances of finite existence as being unmitigated evils, is reflected in the idea that the Tamasguna is evil also. This is an erroneous opinion because all the older sages are agreed that some mixture of the Tamasguna is present even in the highest aspects of divinity, so long as there is any manifestation whatever.

The relative evil from which both yoga and alchemy deliver us is the undue predominance of Salt or Tamas. In the Western schools of Ageless Wisdom this is emphasized. Thus, although salt is used in the story of Lot's wife to represent the crystallizing and limiting consequences of that mistaken mental attitude which always harks back to precedent and to the conditions of past experience, we find that Jesus compared his pupils to the same principle on account of its preservative quality.

In the Qabalah, again, the usefulness of Salt is emphasized. The Hebrew name for it is מלח, melakh. This referred originally, from a verbal form, to the sea itself and is spelled with the same letters, meaning "to flow, to dissolve, to vanish away." In Aramaic, the same combination of letters forms a verb meaning "to subsist." The idea is that subsistence, or manifestation, is really an eternal flux, even as the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, was wont to assert.

מלח has the value 78 which is three times 26, or the threefold extension of יהוה, Jehovah, "That which was, is, and will be." By Gematria, or correspondence of words to the same number, מלח is equivalent to חנוך, Enoch, the name of the patriarch who "walked with God." His name means "initiated." Another word equivalent to מלח, spelled with the same letters, differently arranged, is לחם, lechem, "food, bread."

This reminds us that the birthplace of Jesus, whose name signifies "Reality liberates," is said to have been בית-לחם, Beth-lechem, or Bethlehem, "the house of bread." This corresponds to what has been said elsewhere about the importance of the Virgo area in the human body in which the assimilation of food is carried out. It sheds light also on the real meaning of the dogma of Jesus' virgin birth.



Finally, מֵזְלָה, as 78, is equivalent to מֵזְלָה, mezla, a Qabalistic term used to designate the descending power flowing down through the channels of the Sephiroth and the letters from Kether, the Crown, to Malkuth, the Kingdom. The literal meaning of mezla is "to drip, to flow down in drops."

Compare this with what is said in the lessons on the First Matter of the appearance of the Prima Materia to the awakened vision of "miners in the mountains." For Qabalists, mezla is the same as Shakti for yogis. As Shakti produces the seeming multiplicity of appearances, so mezla produces all the manifold aspects of being summarized in the ten Sephiroth and twenty-two letters constituting the Thirty-two Paths of Wisdom on the Tree of Life.

Furthermore, the number 78 is the sum of the numbers from 1 to 12, so that 78 stands for the completion of the Great Work with its twelve "labors," like those of Hercules. Any correspondence to the number 12, moreover, is connected with the symbolism of the Cubic Stone, familiar to students of alchemy as one of the principal emblems of success in the Great Work. This, because every cube is bounded by twelve lines.

In TAROT FUNDAMENTALS there is a great deal of material concerning the symbolism of the cube, and you will remember that representations of a cube occur in Tarot Keys 2, 4, and 7. They have been explained as being symbols of the physical plane, or world of embodiment. They also represent the word Jehovah because the numbers which serve to define the limits of any cube (6 faces, 8 points, 12 lines) add up to 26, the number of יְהוָה.

Finally, both salt and galena, an ore of lead, crystallize in perfect cubes. Thus the symbol of the cube is actually a true representation of Salt and Lead; and since Salt is, by Qabalistic alchemists, attributed to Binah, the Sphere of Saturn, we see the same correlation recognized by these sages.

To some students, this number symbolism may seem to be too complex. Yet it is our duty to tell you that nothing of it may be slighted by him who hopes really to succeed in the Great Work. Not only is it a test of perseverance, because of its difficulty to beginners, but in alchemy as in ordinary chemistry, numeral formulas are of great importance. The science of sacred numeration is the clue to all the Greater Mysteries. Thus the better you understand the numeral correlations given here and there in the B.O.T.A. instructions, the deeper will be your understanding, and the surer your comprehension, of all our writings.

In the present instance, the various considerations which have been developed from the number 78, as applying to Salt, all point to the idea that this lowest of the three principles is really just as truly an aspect of the One Reality as are either of the others.

The truth is that the One Reality has the power of finitizing itself through the operation of the Tamasguna or Salt. That this principle does produce inertia and darkness, that it is the principle of embodiment which veils consciousness, is undoubtedly true.

Thus, if we add the digits of 78, the result is 15, which is the number of the Tarot



Key named "The Devil." That Key represents the exoteric ideas which are held in respect to the Tamasguna, and these exoteric ideas sometimes affect the thinking of men who possess some measure of true enlightenment. Thus Mohini Chatterji, in his commentary on THE BHAGAVAD-GITA, explicitly identifies Tamas with "badness," and even Swami Vivekananda permits himself to say that one of the main objects of yoga is to "get rid" of this quality.

Both these writers were thoroughly familiar with the teaching of the Gita which says explicitly that all three qualities are present in every part and plane of manifestation—in the lives of the highest gods, as well as in the lives of the lowest of creatures. If Tamas, then, be "badness," it follows that badness is part of the make-up of the gods. To get rid of Tamas is impossible. Yoga and alchemy alike have for their object not the extirpation of Tamas but the overcoming of its undue preponderance, the utilization of its form-making power in the production of bodies which shall serve as adequate channels for the out-pouring of the light and powers of limitless Spirit.

Mine inferior nature is the universal substance,  
     The divine mirror  
 Wherein I, who dwell at the heart of all things,  
     Am reflected to myself.

To the uninstructed, therefore,  
 Who mistake the reflection for that which is reflected,  
 My secondary nature seemeth to be more interior  
 Than the Primal Will.  
 This error may be likened to the illusion which ariseth  
 When one seeth a room reflected in a glass,  
 And thinketh he seeth the room itself.  
 For though what presenteth itself in the mirror of  
     Wisdom is eternal,  
 The medium of reflection hath its place in the without,  
 In the realm of secondary and created things.

(From the BOOK OF TOKENS by Dr. Paul Foster Case.)



# THE GREAT WORK

## Lesson Sixteen

The fundamental idea in the Great Work is the establishment and maintenance of equilibrium. This idea is suggested by the alchemical symbol for Salt, a circle with a horizontal diameter. This represents the balance between that which is above and that which is below.

If the horizontal line be valued as 2, and the circumference of the circle as 22, then the symbol stands for the number 24, and for these words: נו"ה, gevyah, a body or substance; ז"ז, zeez, abundance; and כ"ר, kad, a pot, a large earthenware vessel. That all three of these words are related to the meaning of alchemical Salt is obvious.

Again, if the horizontal line be taken as a diameter, representing the number 7, the symbol will stand for the number 29, corresponding to these words: ה"ך, hadak, to break down, to overturn; כ"ז, kazab, to spin, to bind together, to deceive; and in Latin Gematria, magia, magic. These words are truly related to the operation of alchemical Salt, as the finitizing principle which breaks down the homogeneity of the Infinite, thus producing the web of complex illusion which deceives the ignorant. Furthermore, this web of illusion is the true magia or magic. Indeed, the very word magia is closely related to the Sanskrit Maya, which, elsewhere, we have seen to be associated with Binah, the Sephirah which is connected alchemically with Salt.

The preliminary process of the Great Work consists in the union of Sulphur with Mercury (Rajas with Sattva), to the end that the inertia and darkness of Salt (Tamas) may be overcome.

Little by little, through the influx of power from the superconscious level (Mercury) effected by control of thought and action at the self-conscious level (Sulphur), the preponderance of fixed, habitual subconscious impulses (Salt) over self-conscious determinations (Sulphur) is overcome. Eventually, the subconscious level of the Life-power's activity is purged and purified. Its fixed conditions are thus volatilized (that is, its complexes are dissolved), and new and beneficent fixations ensue under the influx of superconscious powers.

Mastery of subconsciousness (Salt) is not brought about by dissolving all complexes, and keeping them dissolved. A complex is simply a group of mental forces clustered round a nucleus. What we are to get rid of are the wrong kinds of complexes.

The first steps in yoga and alchemy have to do with dissolution. In yoga they are:

1. Yama, non-killing, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, non-receiving of gifts;
2. Niyama, cleanliness, contentment, self-control, study, devotion;
3. Asana, posture and muscular control;
4. Pranayama, control of the nerve currents through regulation of breath;
5. Pratyahara, observation of the workings of the mind, similar to the catharsis of analytical psychology.

These are paralleled by five stages in the preparatory work of alchemy:



1. Calcination, the purgation of the "Stone" by gentle heat which expels the volatile matters;
2. Dissolution, the breaking up of complexes through works similar to Niyama;
3. Separation, akin to the first stages of Pratyahara, wherein the flow of ideas is observed;
4. Conjunction, a second stage of the practice of Pratyahara, in which the Philosophical Man and Woman are united;
5. Putrefaction, closely related to Pranayama, which, by changing the nerve currents in the body, affects also the subtle states of subconsciousness, and completes the dissolution of complexes which retard free life-expression.

A hint of the meaning of conjunction is to be found in the symbolism of Tarot Key 6, the Lovers. The final stage of the work of conjunction is represented in Tarot by the Hermit, whose letter, Yod, signifies coition or copulation. Putrefaction is the alchemical process symbolized by Key 13, Death, which is also a general summary of the whole process of dissolution.

We do not mean to say that the stages of yoga are precisely the same as the alchemical processes--the same in order, that is. All we intend to show here is that both forms of the one Great Art deal with purification, equilibration and transformation. What is purified is really the Tamasguna, or Salt, the subconscious level of the Life-power's self-expression.

Concerning Sulphur, Hermes says: "It will receive the powers of the highest and lowest planets, and with its force it penetrates solid things; it overcomes matter and all precious stones."

The "planets" are the interior stars, or chakras, and Sulphur is to "receive" their powers because the activity so designated is really a synthesis of all the active forces of the chakras. In Tarot, it is the red robe of the Magician. On this account we are told by Ripley that the spiritual seed of Sulphur is the secret fire of the alchemists.

This secret fire is what is said to penetrate solid things. It is a spiritual force, and it permeates even the hardest minerals. We need have no difficulty in understanding this today, because even exoteric physics pictures the densest forms of matter as being composed of particles of energy (electrons, protons and neutrons) separated from one another by distances which, relatively to the size of the particles, are truly astronomical. The secret fire, or seed of Sulphur, is a subtle form of energy which fills the seemingly empty spaces between these tiny particles. The secret fire itself is non-physical, and may be directed by mental means. Herein is one of the great secrets of true adeptship.

Norton, in his ORDINAL OF ALCHEMY, speaks of "that kind of sulphur which is extracted from metals." What he means is precisely what Hermes says when he tells us the alchemical Sulphur receives the powers of the highest and lowest planets. For the alchemical metals and the planets are the same; and whether one says Sulphur receives the power of the planets, or that it is extracted from metals, what is meant is that Sulphur is the fiery energy synthesized from the chakras.



The author of THE NEW CHEMICAL LIGHT says:

"Among the three principles the Sages have justly assigned the first place to Sulphur, as the whole Art is concerned with the manner of its preparation. Sulphur is of three chief kinds: that which tinges or colours; that which congeals Mercury; and essential Sulphur, which matures it . . . Sulphur is more mature than the other principles, and Mercury cannot be coagulated without it. The aim and object of our Art is to elicit from metals that Sulphur by means of which the Mercury of the Sages is, in the veins of the earth, congealed into silver and gold; in this operation the Sulphur acts the part of the male, and our Mercury that of the female. Of the composition and action of these two are engendered the Mercuries of the Philosophers."

Sulphur is said to be more "mature," because, psychologically speaking, it is, in man, the most highly developed mode of consciousness. Salt, or subconsciousness, is subordinate to Sulphur, and is a less highly evolved manifestation of the Life-power. Mercury, or superconsciousness, though it is a higher phase of the Life-power's activity, is not so fully expressed in human life as is the quality of Rajas, Sulphur, or self-consciousness.

Self-consciousness, working through the desire nature, is said to "tinge or colour," because all our experience of the world is modified by our own states of self-conscious awareness. We do not see things as they actually are. Every human perception is conditioned by the mental state of the perceiver. For example, consider perspective in pictures. What is really a shaded circle, on a flat surface, appears to be a sphere because we remember spheres. So might we bring forward innumerable instances to show that all human experience is tinged by the quality of Rajas, or Sulphur.

Sulphur is said to "congeal Mercury," because one power of self-consciousness is its ability to bring down the volatile, or indefinite, states of superconsciousness into the field of self-conscious awareness, so as to apply universal principles to finite and particular circumstances. In Tarot, the picture of the Magician represents this power to perform the work described by alchemists as the congelation of Mercury by Sulphur.

The essential Sulphur, which matures Mercury, acting toward Mercury the part of male, is the power of Rajas to establish forms for the specific expression of the indeterminate principles of superconsciousness. In this, the philosophical Mercury seems to act as the female, or form-producing power, and to be impregnated by self-consciousness.

It may be well to say that what seems to be true here is not what really occurs. The Mental Science writer, Judge Troward, speaks somewhere of our "making up the Universal Mind," and this is what is meant by the impregnation of the female Mercury by the male Sulphur. It certainly appears to many persons as if man, by formulating clear images of his desires, were able to force the Universal Life to take these forms.

Much that passes for New Thought, practical metaphysics, and even magic, is the endeavor to coerce the Universal Life into forms of activity desired by man. The common idea of the nature of prayer is a glaring example of this. Students who have progressed far enough in the B.O.T.A. curriculum to receive these lessons on the Great



Work have already had sufficient instruction to protect them against being deceived by this appearance.

The author of THE NEW CHEMICAL LIGHT continues:

"It is true that Sulphur is the true and chief substance of the Stone. Yet you curse it unjustly. For it lies heavily chained in a dark prison, and cannot do as it would. Its hands and feet have been bound, and the doors of the dungeon closed upon it, at the bidding of its mother, Nature . . . Its jailers are of its own kindred, but grievous tyrants . . . He (Sulphur) can perform a thousand things, and is the heart of all . . . Sulphur is the virtue of the world, and although Nature's second-born--yet the oldest of all things. To those who know him, he is as obedient as a little child . . . When he is set free, he binds his jailers, and gives their three kingdoms to his deliverer. He also gives him a magic mirror, in which the three parts of the wisdom of the whole world may be seen and known at a glance; and this mirror clearly exhibits the creation of the world, the influences of the celestial virtues on earthly things, and the way in which Nature composes substances by the regulation of heat. With its aid, men may at once understand the motion of the Sun and Moon, and that universal movement by which Nature herself is governed."

The jailers of Sulphur are erroneous ideas. The dark prison is the prison of ignorance. When self-consciousness is freed from the chains of ignorance by yoga, or the alchemical process, it makes the magic mirror described by our author. For when self-consciousness is liberated from ignorance, it penetrates the veils of superficial appearance.

What needs emphasis is that he who is enlightened by this liberation of self-consciousness from the bonds of ignorance is, by this illumination, enabled to wield powers whose very existence is unsuspected by the ordinary man. He knows, not only the "way in which Nature composes substances by the regulation of heat," but he is able, also, to effect compositions and combinations to bring about a radical change in his own vehicle of personality. By accomplishing this, he is enabled to perform the second part of the Great Work, and make the physical agent, external to his own organism, which may be used for transmutations, and for healing all sorts of diseases.

Bernard of Trevisan says: "Some believe that in the generation of metals a sulphuric substance is introduced from without; but, on the contrary, it is clear that in the working of Nature sulphur is already enclosed in the mercury." That is, Sattva or Mercury, the highest of the three principles, is also that which includes both the others. For not only is the Sulphur in the Mercury, but the Salt as well.

Superconsciousness is the original mode of consciousness, and from it are derived both self-consciousness and subconsciousness. In alchemical language, Mercury is the original substance, containing both Sulphur and Salt. Thus the alchemists say repeatedly that there is only one substance required for the Great Work, to which nothing is added, and from which nothing is taken away.

Summing up our study of the three principles, we may say:



1. That Mercury, or Sattvaguna, is the superconscious aspect of the Life-power's self-expression. In Qabalah it corresponds to Kether, the Crown. This is the first Sephirah, the highest of the "Three Supernals" on the Tree of Life. In another kind of symbolic representation, the Mercury of the Sages corresponds to Key 0 of Tarot.

2. That Sulphur, or Rajasguna, is the self-conscious aspect, derived directly from superconsciousness, and immediately subordinate to superconsciousness. In Qabalah it corresponds to Chokmah, the Sephirah of Wisdom, which is the seat of the life-force. In Tarot, this aspect of consciousness is represented primarily by the Magician; but all the Keys in the sequence including 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16 and 19 are symbols of Sulphur.

As Boehme indicates by dividing the word into its two syllables, Sul and Phur, this principle works in two ways. In combination with that which is below it, Sulphur veils consciousness by means of inertia (Salt), and lowers the level of personal consciousness to that of physical sensation. In combination with what is above it, Sulphur unveils consciousness by means of illumination, and raises the level of personal awareness, freeing it from bondage to physical sensation. Sulphur, therefore, is the actual transforming power which is utilized in the Great Work.

3. That Salt, or Tamasguna, is the subconscious aspect. In Qabalah, Salt is Binah, the third Sephirah on the Tree of Life. Binah is the Great Sea of substance. Among the Tarot Keys, this principle is represented primarily by the High Priestess. In a certain recondite sense, however, Salt is symbolized also by the following pairs of Keys: 2 and 3; 5 and 6; 8 and 9; 11 and 12; 14 and 15; 17 and 18; 20 and 21. These Keys represent the working of forces which are chiefly subconscious, or below the threshold of conscious awareness.

From these considerations it will be evident that the burden of the Great Work falls on Sulphur. Thus, in THE BOOK OF LAMBSPRING, we read this summary of the entire alchemical operation: "Cook the Sulphur well with Sulphur." So also, Ripley says the spiritual seed of Sulphur is the secret fire, burning in the athanor, the unique chemical instrument, or furnace, designated by a name, אֶת־הַנּוֹר, which itself means "Essence of Fire."

When the self-conscious level of personality is rightly understood and utilized, it acts as a mediator and transformer. This we see summarized in Key 1 of Tarot. Then the Sulphur assimilates, or swallows, the Mercury of the Sages. In consequence of this, the Salt is purified, after having passed through the stages mentioned above. Subconscious states of mind are modified, and the power of subconsciousness to build physical structure and control the functions of the body is turned in the right direction.

We have seen that the numeral value of the Mercury symbol is 37. This makes it correspond to the number of the word יְחִידָה, Yekhidah, the Qabalistic designation for the universal Self seated in Kether, the Crown. 37 is also the number of the verb הִבֵּל, abel, which means primarily "to breathe," but in the Talmud signifies "to evaporate." The same word denotes "transitoriness, emptiness," and is translated "vanity", in the English version of Ecclesiastes. From it is derived the proper name Abel, given to the second son of Adam and Eve. What we may clearly perceive in these



meanings is the volatility of the Mercury principle, and its close link with breath, or air, which the Hindus call Prana, the Greeks Pneuma, and the Hebrews רוח, Ruach.

The value of the Sulphur symbol, considered as a cross surmounted by a triangle, is 7. When we bear in mind the fact that Sulphur is associated with the Rajasguna, it is at least an interesting coincidence that one of the Hebrew words having the value of 7 is the verbal noun רָו, ow, "desire, will, appetite."

The combination of Mercury and Sulphur will therefore correspond to the addition of 37 and 7, or 44. This is the value of the words חול, khool, "sand," and דם, dam, "blood," which we have already noticed in our study of the First Matter. The blood is the combination of "white" and "red" so often mentioned in alchemical books.

Taken as a circumference of 22, with a diameter of 7, the symbol for Salt stands for the number 29. This added to 44 makes 73. Thus the combined numeral values of the three symbols add to the number of חכמה, Chokmah, Wisdom, the name of the second Sephirah.

To Chokmah, the book AESCH METZAREPH attributes Sulphur. Here is an intimation that the powers of Mercury and Salt are somehow combined in Sulphur. Many hints to the same effect are scattered through the books of the sages.

Again, 73 is the number of כאבן, ka-ehben, "as (or like) a stone," and this is significant because the successful completion of the Great Work combines the powers of Sulphur, Mercury and Salt into the Stone of the Wise, or Philosophers' Stone. Note here that there is a definite relation of meanings between the Stone of the Wise (or Stone of Wisdom) and the name of the second Sephirah, Chokmah, which has the same number as that resulting from the addition of the numbers corresponding to the alchemical symbols for the three principles.

What is meant is that the Great Work has a mental result and a physical outcome. It is a transformation of the consciousness of the adept. It is a transmutation of his physical body which makes him a being as far beyond the natural man as is the natural man beyond the lower animals. Such a person is able to wield extraordinary powers, among them being mental control of the molecular structure of matter, so that such an adept can make the external agent of transmutation, by means of which, if he knows how to employ it, even a person who is not an adept may transmute metals and heal diseases. Only an adept, however, may make this agent.



# THE GREAT WORK

## THE ELEMENT OF FIRE (1)

### Lesson Seventeen

Alchemy is a science of fire, a philosophy of fire, and an art which consists mainly in the direction of fire. By Qabalah and Tarot we may unlock the meaning of the alchemical writings and symbols, but we cannot use the keys until we have examined the locks. We shall begin this lesson, therefore, with quotations from what alchemists have written concerning the element of fire.

Paracelsus says:

"First, and chiefly, the principal subject of this Art is fire, which always exists in one and the same property and mode of operation, nor can it receive its life from anything else. It possesses, therefore, a state and power common to all fires which lie hid in secret, of vivifying. The fire in the furnace may be compared to the sun. It heats the furnace and the vessels, just as the sun heats the vast universe. For as nothing can be produced in the world without the sun, so also in this Art nothing can be produced without this simple fire. No operation can be completed without it. It is the Great Arcanum of Art, embracing all things which are comprised therein, neither can it be comprehended in anything else. It abides by itself, and needs nothing; but all others which stand in need of this can get fruition of it and have life from it. Know, then, that the ultimate and also the primal matter of everything is fire. This is, as it were, the key that unlocks the chest. It is this which makes manifest whatever is hidden in anything.

"By the element of fire all that is imperfect is destroyed and taken away, as for instance, the five metals, Mercury, Jupiter, Mars, Venus, and Saturn. On the other hand, the perfect metals, Sol and Luna, are not consumed in that same fire. They remain in the fire: and at the same time, out of the other imperfect ones which are destroyed, they assume their own body and become visible to the eyes. For fire tests everything, and when the impure matter is separated the three pure substances are displayed. Fire separates that which is constant or fixed from that which is fugitive or volatile. Fire is the father or active principle of separation. Whatsoever pertains to separation belongs to the science of Alchemy. It teaches how to extract, coagulate, and separate every substance in its peculiar vessel. Fire contains within itself the whole of Alchemy by its native power to tinge, graduate, and fix, which is, as it were, born with it and impressed upon it."

Nundinus writes: "The fire which includes all our chemical processes is threefold: the fiery element of the air, of water, and of earth. This is all our magistry requires."

Bondinus declares: "Our Stone is fire, and has been generated in fire, without, however, having been consumed by fire."

According to Medales: "The fire of the Sages may be extracted from all things, and is called the Quintessence. It is of earth, air, water, and fire."

Basil Valentine hides the secret in plain sight, thus: "Our fire is a common fire, and our furnace is a common furnace. The fire of a spirit-lamp is useless for our purpose, nor is there any profit in horse-dung, nor in other kinds of heat in the providing



of which so much expense is incurred. Neither do we want many kinds of furnaces. Only our threefold furnace affords facilities for properly regulating the heat of the fire. Our furnace is cheap, and our material is cheap. He who has the material will also find a furnace in which to prepare it, just as he who has flour will not be at a loss for an oven in which it may be baked."

Thomas Vaughan writes:

"Fire, notwithstanding the diversities of it in this sublunary kitchen of the elements, is but one thing from one root. The effects of it are various, according to the distance and nature of the subject wherein it resides, for that makes it vital or violent. It sleeps in most things--as in flints, where it is silent and invisible. It is a kind of perdue, lies close like a spider in the cabinet of his web, to surprise all that comes within his lines. He never appears without his prey in his foot; where he finds aught that's combustible, there he discovers himself--for, if we speak properly--he is not generated but manifested. There is nothing in the world generated without fire. This fire is at the root and about the root--I mean the center--of all things, both visible and invisible. It is in water, earth and air; it is in minerals, herbs and beasts; it is originally in God Himself, for He is the fountain of heat and fire, and from Him it is derived to the rest of the creatures in a certain stream or sunshine. Now, the magicians afford us but two notions whereby we may know their fire: it is, as they describe it, moist and invisible. Hence they have called it the horse's belly and horse-dung; but this is only by way of analogy, for there is in horse-dung a moist heat, but no fire that is visible. Now then, let us compare the common Vulcan with this philosophical Vesta, that we may see wherein they are different. First of all, then, the philosophers' fire is moist, and truly so is that of the kitchen too. We see that flames contract and extend themselves; now they are short, now they are long, which cannot be without moisture to maintain the flux and continuity of their parts. But the common fire is excessively hot, but moist in a far inferior degree, and therefore destructive, for it preys on the moisture of other things. On the contrary, the warmth and moisture of the magical agent are equal; the one temperates and satisfies the other; it is a humid, tepid fire, or as we commonly express ourselves, blood-warm. This is their first and greatest difference in relation to our desired effect; we will now consider the second. The kitchen fire, as we all know, is visible: but the philosophers' fire is invisible, and therefore no kitchen fire. This Almadir expressly tells us in these words: 'Our work,' saith he, 'can be performed by nothing but by the invisible beams of our fire.' And again, 'Our fire is a corrosive fire, which brings a cloud about our glass or vessel, in which cloud the beams of our fire are hidden.' To be short, the philosophers call this agent their bath, because it is moist, as baths are; but in very truth it is no kind of bath, neither of the sea nor of dew, but a most subtle fire and purely natural, but the excitation of it is artificial."

Jacob Boehme says this:

"When life and movement appear, which previously existed not, a principle is present. Fire is a principle with its property, and light is also a principle with its property, for it is generated from fire, and yet is not the fire's property. It has also its own life in itself, but fire is the cause thereof. All sense, and whatever is to come to anything,



must have fire. There springs nothing out of the earth without the essence of fire. It is a cause of all the three principles, and of all that can be named."

Many alchemical books quote from THE CHALDEAN ORACLES, a collection of Neoplatonic fragments attributed to Zoroaster, who probably had nothing to do with their composition. Their substance is practically the same as the teaching of Porphyry, in whose writings we find the following:

"There is above the Celestial Lights an Incorruptible Flame always sparkling; the spring of life, the formation of all beings, the original of all things. This Flame produceth all things, and nothing perisheth but what it consumeth. It maketh itself known by itself. This Fire cannot be contained in any place; it is without body and without matter. It encompasseth the heavens.

"The heart should not fear to approach this adorable Fire, or to be touched by it; it will never be consumed by this sweet Fire, whose mild and tranquil heat maketh the binding, the harmony, and the duration of the world. Nothing subsisteth but by this Fire, which is God Himself. All is full of God, and God is in all."

In THE HERMETIC ARCANUM, Jean d'Espagnet says:

"Nature useth fire, so also doth art after its example, as an instrument and mallet in cutting out its works. In both operations therefore fire is master and perfecter. Wherefore the knowledge of fire is most necessary to a philosopher, without which as another Ixion (condemned to labor in vain), he shall turn about the wheel of nature to no purpose.

"The name fire is equivocal among philosophers; for sometimes it is used by metonymy for heat; and so there be as many fires as heats. In the generation of metals and vegetables nature acknowledgeth a three-fold fire; to wit, celestial, terrestrial, and innate. The first flows from Sol as its fountain into the bosom of the earth; it stirreth up fumes, or mercurial and sulphurous vapors, of which the metals are created, and mixeth itself amongst them; it stirreth up that torpid fire which is placed in the seeds of vegetables and addeth fresh sparks unto it, as a spur to vegetation. The second lurketh in the bowels of the earth, by the impulse and action whereof the subterraneous vapors are driven upwards as through pores and pipes, and thrust outwards from the center towards the surface of the earth, both for the composition of metals, where the earth swelleth up, and also for the production of vegetables, by putrefying their seed, by softening them, and preparing them for generation. The third fire, viz., innate, is also indeed solar; it is generated of a vapid smoke of metals, and grows together with the humid matter, and is retained as in a prison; or more truly, as form is conjoined with the mixed body; it firmly inhereth in the seeds of vegetables, until being solicited by the point of its father's rays, it be called out, then motion intrinsically moveth and formeth the matter, and becometh the molder and dispenser of the whole mixture. In the generation of animals, celestial fire doth insensibly cooperate with the animal, for it is the first agent in nature; for the heat of the female answereth to terrestrial fire; when the seed putrifies, this warmth prepareth it. For truly the fire is implanted in the seed; then the son of Sol disposeth of the matter, and being disposed, he informeth it.

"Philosophers have very much insisted upon secrecy in regard to their fire; they



scarce have been bold to describe it, but show it rather by a description of its properties, than by its name; as that it is called airy fire, vaporous, humid, and dry, clear, or star-like; because it may easily by degrees be increased or remitted, as the artificer pleaseth."

Artephius says:

"Our fire is mineral, it is uniform, continuous, it does not evaporate unless too strongly excited; it participates of the nature of Sulphur; it is derived from another source than matter, it destroys all, it dissolves, congeals and calcines; it requires skill to find it and to make it; it costs nothing or very little; moreover, is humid, vaporous, digesting, altering, penetrating, subtle, aerial, not violent, not burning, surrounding, containing and unique. It is also the fountain of Living Water, or Quicl-Water, which surrounds and encloses the place where the King and Queen bathe. This humid Fire suffices for all the Work in the beginning, in the middle, and at the end; because all Art consists in this Fire. There is a natural Fire, a Fire against Nature, and an unnatural Fire, which does not burn; finally there is a warm, dry, humid, cold fire. Think well on what I have just said, and work the right way, without using any strange matter."

d'Espagnet, already quoted, says also:

"Nature useth a double fire in the work of generation, intrinsic and extrinsic; the former being placed in the seeds and mixtures of things, is hid in their center; and as a principle of motion and life, doth move and quicken the body. But the latter, extrinsic, whether it be poured down from heaven or earth, raiseth the former, as drowned with sleep, and compelleth it to action; for the vital sparks implanted in the seeds stand in need of an external motor, that they may be moved and act.

"It is even so in the Philosopher's Work; for the matter of the Stone possesseth his interior fire, which is partly innate, partly also is added by the Philosophers' Art, for those are united and come inward together, because they are homogeneous: the internal standeth in need of the external, which the Philosopher administereh according to the precepts of Art and Nature; this compelleth the former to move. These fires are as two wheels, whereof the hidden one being moved by the visible one, it is moved sooner or later; and thus Art helpeth Nature.

"The internal fire is the middle nature between the Motor and the Matter; whence it is, that as it is moved by heat, it moveth this; and if so be it shall be driven intensely or remissly, it will work after the same manner in the matter. The information of the whole Work dependeth upon the measure of external fire.

"He that is ignorant of the degrees and points of external fire, let him not start upon the Philosophical Work; for he will never obtain light out of darkness, unless the heats pass through their middle stages, like the elements, whose extremes are not converted, but only their means.

"Because the whole Work consisteth in separation and perfect preparation of the four elements, therefore so many grades of fire are necessary thereunto; for every element is extracted by the degree of fire proper to it."



The universal fire of the alchemists is the same as the Tejas or Agni Tattva of the yogis. They have, indeed, the same symbol--an upright, equilateral triangle.

Hindu scriptures declare that Agni is the supreme deity, and to this personification of cosmic fire they attribute the powers of all the other gods in the Hindu pantheon. Agni is represented as a young ram, carrying a notched banner, on which is inscribed a swastika.

This symbolism is just what is shown on wax medals, used by the Roman Church to represent Christ as the Lamb of God, or Agnus Dei. The only difference is that the Church substitutes a cross having equal arms for the swastika. (See the illustration, under Agnus Dei, in WEBSTER'S NEW INTERNATIONAL DICTIONARY.)

In our interpretation of the Rosicrucian manifestoes, we have shown how this peculiar symbolism of the young ram, or lamb, is employed to indicate the true nature of the "Founder" of the Rosicrucian Order. "Our Brother and Father, C.R.," represents the spiritual source of the higher consciousness attained by those who succeed in the Great Work. This higher consciousness results also from success in yoga. Brother C.R. is what THE BOOK OF TOKENS calls, "the circle of eternal flame, self-fed." He personifies the highest aspect of the alchemists' secret fire.

The center of that fire is the Ego, seated, as you have learned from THE MASTER PATTERN, in Tiphareth, the Sphere of Sol. Sol is the "celestial fire" mentioned in the quotations given in this lesson. Sol is also the gold, which it is said an alchemist must have, even before he begins the Great Work. Thus it becomes evident that the secret fire and "gold" are essentially the same.

In subsequent lessons of this group we shall explain the words of the adepts quoted in this lesson, to the end that you may be able to find, and draw forth into manifestation by art, this secret fire.



## THE GREAT WORK

### THE ELEMENT OF FIRE (2)

#### Lesson Eighteen

The quotation from Paracelsus informs us that the secret fire of the alchemists is the very life of the alchemical Art. It goes on to say that this hidden fire has the power of vivifying. The furnace which Paracelsus mentions is the athanor, that is, the human body, itself produced from the "Essence of Fire" (אֵת הַנּוֹר, Ath Ha-Nour). Paracelsus calls this also a "simple fire," meaning that it is one without a second, a fire unmixed with anything whatsoever. The rest of the first paragraph from his writings is almost a paraphrase of our quotation from Porphyry.

Paracelsus' remarks about the effect of fire on metals are to be understood as referring to the secret metals, or centers in the human nervous system. Note that Sol and Luna, gold and silver, are not destroyed by the secret fire.

In the alchemical operation, the powers of all the other centers are transmuted into the powers of the "Sun" and "Moon." The centers themselves are not actually destroyed, nor are the functions of the various glands with which these centers are connected made to cease. The destruction is really a dissolution, followed by a sublimation in which the powers of the lower centers are raised.

In this connection, remember that on the Tree of Life, the Sphere of the Moon is the ninth Sephirah, Yesod, which corresponds to Nephesh, the Vital Soul. The Sphere of the Sun is Tiphareth, which corresponds to the Ego. As a result of the alchemical work at the white (or lunar) stage, the Vital Soul is purified and perfected; and in this stage of the Great Work there is also an awakening of the deeper aspects of memory. In the red (or solar) stage which completes the Great Work, one experiences the spiritual illumination resulting from personal contact with the central Ego.

Nundinus and Medales identify the secret fire of alchemy with the Stone and with the Quintessence. The Stone, אֶבֶן, ehben, is the same by Gematria as the Sun, or gold, חֶסֶד, khammaw, both words adding to 53. The Aether of the Greeks, and the Akasha of the Hindus are the same as the Quintessence.

Basil Valentine, as we have said, hides the secret in plain sight. This he does by using the adjective "common." Uninstructed readers suppose from this that he means ordinary fire. His real thought is this:

The philosophical fire is common to all things. It is a fire shared by all. So also is the alchemical furnace a common possession. Everybody has both the fire and the furnace.

They who waste their time and substance in looking outside themselves for these things betray their ignorance of the true meaning of alchemy. The furnace is threefold, according to the division of human personality into Body or alchemical Salt, Soul or alchemical Sulphur, and Spirit or alchemical Mercury.

Thomas Vaughan develops Valentine's doctrine that the fire is a common fire. He



is careful to say: "He is not generated, but manifested." Today this is, of course, common knowledge. We do not generate any of the forces we have applied so wonderfully. We simply provide suitable conditions for their manifestation.

Vaughan, furthermore, is confirmed by present-day science when he says that the secret fire "is in water, earth and air; in minerals, herbs and beasts; in men, stars and angels." It is all-pervasive.

To readers familiar with our other publications, it will be no new thing to think of this magical agent as being an influx of power which may properly be called "a certain stream or sunshine." Without any metaphor whatever, the alchemical fire is the radiant energy of the sun. This is also the substance of all things on this planet.

It is said to be moist, or like water, because it flows in streams, forms itself into whirlpools, collects like water in suitable reservoirs, has currents which may be charted almost as definitely as those of the sea, and forms itself into waves. At the same time, it is itself invisible. We see its effects, but the energy remains hidden.

Vaughan's second quotation from Almadir is noteworthy. The secret fire is said to be corrosive because it does actually "eat away by degrees." The alchemical glass or vessel is the auric egg, the ovoid, transparent body surrounding the physical body, and ordinarily extending about eight inches from the surface of the latter. The cloud is the denser physical body, with its etheric counterpart. This is formed inside the auric egg by the action of the vital fire. It is the veil which hides the beams of the secret fire.

One should consider well, also, what is so clearly indicated by Vaughan's assertion that the secret fire is blood-warm. One of our other quotations mentions that the secret fire partakes of the nature of Sulphur, and, in one of the preceding lessons, we found the combined values for the symbols of Mercury and Sulphur to be the number 44, which is the numeral correspondence to the Hebrew noun דָּם, dam, blood.

Here, again, it may be well to remember that "our Brother and Father, C.R." is said to have tarried somewhere in Damascus before going to be initiated into the Mysteries at the Temple of Dam-Car (Blood of the Lamb) in Arabia. The place-name, Damascus, signifies "work," but it also veils something deeper. For it is spelled דַּמְסֻקַּ, and in both Chaldee and Hebrew there is a word, שָׂק, pronounced almost the same as our English noun sack, and having the same meaning. The Place of the Work is also the blood-sack, the vessel of skin containing the liquid "Living Water" which is also our secret fire.

This fire, Vaughan tells us, is itself purely natural, but the excitation of it is artificial. Note carefully the meaning of the word "excitation." Vaughan knew his Latin, and his knowledge influenced his use of English. Fundamentally, to excite is to call something into outer, manifest activity, from within. The natural, secret fire is already present within. The art consists in getting it to come out.

Of all our quotations, those from Jean d'Espagnet will best repay the meditations of a truly earnest student. Taken in conjunction with what is said by Artephius, the words



of d'Espagnet constitute a complete revelation of the alchemical mystery concerning the secret fire.

Note first of all, that Artephius says the fire is mineral, by which we may understand that it is by no means peculiar to the organic kingdoms of nature. He says also that this fire partakes of the nature of Sulphur, and this should be compared carefully with what we have said concerning Sulphur in preceding lessons. Then the student will know why Artephius says the fire is derived from another source than matter.

In reading the quotations from d'Espagnet, it is well to remember that every alchemical doctrine has its microcosmic application. No matter what forms of language may be employed by the sages, and no matter how obvious it may seem that they are speaking of activities which go on outside man's body, it is the invariable rule that there are counterparts of those activities inside the organism, and the latter are the principal concern of those who seek to succeed in alchemy.

Whenever we find an expression such as "the bowels of the earth," or one such as "the impulse and action whereby the subterraneous vapors are driven upwards as through pores and pipes," we need to give much thought to the microcosmic import of the words.

The Hebrew word for fire is שֵׁן, Esh. The same letters, with different vowel points, form the word יֵשׁ, signifying "entity." In Aramaic, שֵׁן, Osh, means "foundation."

To the first letter, Aleph, Qabalists attribute Ruach, the Life-Breath, and this undifferentiated Life-breath they term also "Fiery or Scintillating Intelligence." The second letter is Shin, which is itself the letter corresponding to the element of fire, and to the "Perpetual Intelligence." Furthermore, Shin is called the "holy letter," as we have said elsewhere, because its number, 300, is the value of the words רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים, Ruach Elohim, "Life-breath of the Creative Powers." Thus the two Hebrew letters which compose the noun for "fire" are both symbols of that element, and symbols also of the Life-breath. They are likewise the first and last of the three mother letters.

The alchemists' fire is actually Ruach, the all-permeating Life-breath. Its primary manifestation is shown in Tarot as the Fool, who represents the Life-breath as about to descend into the abyss of manifestation. The alchemical fire, when it has entered into the abyss of manifestation, passes through the transformations typified by the numbered Keys of Tarot following the Fool, until it completes the circle of its activities in the resurrection pictured by Key 20, which is attributed to the letter Shin.

Key 20 symbolizes the anastasis, or "rising again," usually called "resurrection" in English translations of the New Testament. This is an esoteric term. It was misunderstood, almost from the beginning of the open teaching of the Gnostic doctrines veiled by the letter of the Gospels and the Epistles. The "dead" are those who are caught in the web of the world's illusion.

Now, according to the values of Greek letters, the word anastasis has the same number (963) as the noun techne, signifying art, craft, skill, whence is derived the English noun technique. The "rising again" is not a natural process. Thus Vaughan says the



excitation of the secret fire is artificial.

The same idea occurs often in esoteric writings. We are told there is a force extremely powerful, but man must direct it. Eliphas Levi goes so far as to say this force is the burning body of the Holy Ghost. Yet he says also that it is the devil of exoteric dogmatism, the blind force from which souls must be loosed if they would be freed from the chains of earth.

The alchemical fire must first be known, and then controlled. It will not, as many have fancied, change the present human race into supermen by a process similar to that which, as some suppose, evolved humanity by slow mutations from animals. We may look forward to a day when the earth will be governed and inhabited by Masters of Wisdom; but when that day comes, it will be because men and women have taken themselves in hand, and have changed themselves by intelligent direction of the alchemical fire. This process of transmutation is the Great Work.

The Chaldee or Aramaic word for fire is **נור**, nour. We have already noticed it in connection with **אֶתְ הַנּוֹר**, Ath Ha-Nour, which is the original form of athanor. The same word appears also in the Hebrew noun **מְנוֹרָה**, menorah, "candlestick," which is the same by number (301) as **אֵשׁ**, esh, fire. By its letters, **נור** gives further indications as to the nature of the secret fire.

The first letter is **נ**, Nun, to which Qabalists attribute the sign Scorpio, governing the organs of sex. The second letter is **ו**, Vav, representing the sign Taurus, which is both the opposite and the complement to Scorpio, and governs the neck and throat. Thus the first two letters of the word **נור** illustrate the polarity of complementary opposites. The third letter is **ר**, Resh, representing the Sun, which rules the sign Leo, governing the heart, back and spinal cord.

In Scorpio, the ruling planet is Mars, and in that sign Uranus, symbolized by the Tarot Fool, is exalted. In Taurus, the ruling planet is Venus, and in Taurus the Moon is exalted.

In Tarot, Venus is the Empress, and the Moon is the High Priestess. The Sun is symbolized by Key 19. Besides ruling the heart and the spinal cord, the Sun is exalted in Aries, ruled by Mars, and governing the head and brain. In Tarot this is Key 4.

Thus in the word **נור** a Qabalist would find references to the Sun, the Moon, Venus and Mars, and to the bodily areas of the brain, throat, ears, heart, spinal cord and organs of sex. Even a slight acquaintance with the practice of yoga is sufficient to make it plain that these parts of the human body are of great importance in the work.

The secret fire of the philosophers is, as Valentine asserts, a common fire, present everywhere, and available to everyone. It is also the essential vital principle in all forms of manifestation. Yet it has certain special types of expression which are those an alchemist employs in the technical operations of the Great Art. These special forms of the secret fire are at work in the parts of the human body indicated by our analysis of the Aramaic word **נור**.



Hence alchemy must remain today, as it has been in the past, a secret doctrine. Full, detailed explanations of certain facts concerning the secret fire cannot be made, even if one so desired, without incurring severe penalties.

Let us say once more that the alchemical process is not concerned with any sort of jugglery with the sex-function. Our inability to discuss the matter freely is that neither the physiology nor the psychology of that function may be described adequately in writings intended to be sent by mail.

The Creator is myself,  
And I am the Nail which joineth thee to me.  
In thee am I ever present,  
And thou hast only to turn within to find me.

Shut thine ears  
To the confusion of the world which surroundeth thee.  
Open thine inner hearing.  
Aspire earnestly to me.  
Verily thine aspiration is from me,  
And what sendeth thee in search of me  
Is that same eager longing which hath brought thee  
forth;  
And it hath brought forth, too,  
The four worlds and all that they contain.

Thy search for me  
Is mine own search for myself,  
Nor shall that quest of mine,  
Which seemeth now to thee to be  
Thine own pursuit of wisdom and of understanding,  
Be doomed to failure.  
Whosoever thou art that readest or hearest these words,  
Know that thou shalt come to me.

(From the BOOK OF TOKENS by Dr. Paul Foster Case.)



# THE GREAT WORK

## THE ELEMENT OF FIRE (3)

### Lesson Nineteen

Key 20, Judgment, illustrates the threefold manifestation of the One Fire, mentioned in the quotation from Nundinus, by the symbolism of three figures rising from coffins of stone. They represent the same idea that is typified by the three sides of the Pythagorean triangle discussed in an earlier lesson. The man is Osiris, the Father. The woman is Isis, the Mother. Between them is Horus, the Child, the Son who is "one with the Father."

By the implications of the scene and the title of the Key, the angel overhead is the archangel Gabriel. According to Qabalists, however, Gabriel is the angel of the element of water. Here there seems to be a contradiction until we remember the alchemists' explicit declaration that they "burn with water," and then call to mind the several hints given by authors we have quoted to the effect that there is, in their secret fire, a fluidic quality.

The icy peaks or glaciers in the background of Key 20, and the expanse of water supporting the coffins, are symbols of this "moist fire." The coffins are made of stone. They float on the sea to intimate that the solid forms of the mineral kingdom are really supported by the universal fluidic energy.

The human figures have been enclosed in the coffins but are now emerging. This symbolizes the idea that the potencies of human consciousness are present even in mineral forms. To this the passage in Scripture refers which declares that God is able out of stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

The letter Shin (שׁ), corresponding to this Key and to the element of fire, is, as has been explained, related by its number to the words רוח אלהים, Ruach Elohim, "Life-breath of the Creative Powers." 300 is the sum of the numbers from 0 to 24, or the extension of 24. Thus 300 represents the full development of the idea symbolized in the Apocalypse by the twenty-four thrones of the elders (Revelation 4:4). 24 is also the number of the Hebrew noun גויה, geviyah, meaning "substance" or "body," which we have already noticed in connection with one of the numeral correspondences to the alchemical symbol for Salt. Here we have a hint that the secret fire is the extended manifestation of the underlying reality which gives body to all things. Since the symbol for Salt is a circle, that circle corresponds also to the value of the letter-name שׁין, Shin, which is 360, the number of degrees in the circumference of any circle.

In the diagram of the Egyptian triangle, the first space at the left side of the base-line (which is attributed to Isis) has assigned to it the element of fire. Again, in Qabalah, the first letter of the Tetragrammaton, יהוה, is said to stand for the same element. This letter, י, Yod, is attributed to Chokmah on the Tree of Life. This also connects with the idea of fire, because Chokmah is said to be the "Root of Fire." This living fire in Chokmah is חיה, Chaiah, the life-force; and we have seen before that Chaiah is the same as what Hindus call Prana, not only because it is the life-force of all crea-



tures, but also because this Prana is thought of as being universally diffused, and as being one with the radiant energy streaming from and reflected by the various heavenly bodies.

In Tarot, therefore, the letter Yod is symbolized by an ancient, bearded, wise man. He is the Hermit, "He who stands alone." He is Ab, the Father, and Ab is one of the names for Chokmah.

The force he diffuses is represented by the light of a lantern. This light is the secret fire. It is symbolized by a six-pointed star held aloft on a mountain peak. Thus it corresponds to Masloth, "the highways of the stars," another name for Chokmah.

Another aspect of the secret fire is shown by the staff in the Hermit's left hand. This is one of the commoner phallic symbols, and in Key 9 it gives us a hint that the sublimation of the powers it typifies is part of the means whereby the heights of attainment are reached.

Yet at the same time this ninth Key of Tarot, through its correspondence to the letter Yod, is connected also with the zodiacal sign Virgo, and with the special powers of the human organism which are under the presidency of that sign. The source whence we derive our supply of the secret fire is in this region of the human body.

The process of assimilation is a phase of the alchemical operation. It begins by the destruction of the solid forms of food in our mouths, by the action of the teeth in chewing. (Note here the combination of "mouth," or Peh, and "teeth," or Shin, and the fact that each of these two letters relates to the element of fire.)

By mechanical and chemical activities in the alimentary canal, beginning with the mastication of food by the teeth, and continuing until stomach digestion is completed, the solid forms of food are volatilized. Then assimilation begins at the point where the "Virgin's Milk" is taken up by the lacteals.

From this point "fixation" begins as the assimilated material is built into the structure of the body. The first part of the process corresponds to the "Solve," or dissolution, of the alchemists. That by which the volatilized food is converted into blood, and then into tissue, corresponds to the alchemical "Coagula," or fixation.

All this is on the physical plane. On the mental plane, analysis of experience leads to the discovery of the forces, laws and principles behind the phenomena affecting our outer senses.

This analysis is performed "with the help of Mercury," that is, by processes of self-conscious mentation symbolized in Tarot by the Magician. The analysis is followed by a new synthesis of the principles, laws and forces discovered by the process of analysis.

New combinations are made through the operation of creative imagination, symbolized by the Tarot Key called the Empress. Note that she also represents Venus and corresponds to alchemical copper. Thus man is enabled to introduce into the operations of nature new manifestations of her own laws, which she cannot produce except through the



intervention of human agency.

Knowledge of the "use," that is, of the methods of Qabalah and of the old astronomy, or astrology, is said by Paracelsus to be indispensable to the practitioner of the Great Art. This is because the fundamental laws of physical and mental analysis and synthesis were long ago discovered by members of the Inner School who embodied their knowledge in the symbolism of astrology and in the enigmas of Qabalah.

Key 4, the Emperor, illustrates the activity of the alchemical fire in the head of man, in man's power of vision, and in his reason. Through the connection of Key 4 with the letter Heh, the symbolism is related to the sign which begins the circle of the zodiac, the fiery, cardinal sign, Aries.

Aries is typified as a young ram, or lamb, called טלה, taleh, in Hebrew. This word is numbered 44, and is equivalent in value to דם, dam, "blood," to חול, khool, "sand," and to להט, lahat, which means both "flame" and "magic." The connection between Aries and the Hindu fire-god Agni is obvious. In another lesson of this course we have considered the correspondences between "blood" and "sand." To what was said then we now add the idea of magical fire, the essential meaning of the noun להט, lahat.

We emphasize here the notion of rulership or control intimated by the title of Key 4. The alchemical fire, on the mental plane, is the fire of reason. It is the fiery energy at work in the human self-conscious processes of analysis and inductive reasoning. It is also the force that takes form as vision, both mental and physical.

By this power, order is established in the whole of the manifested universe. When we permit it to work through us, it is a magic power. It is the power which composes, frames and constitutes all worlds. When it finds expression through a properly prepared human brain, it enables the possessor of that brain to see things as they really are. It brings about so perfect a manifestation of reason that all details of that person's life are rightly ordered to his best advantage.

Key 8, Strength, is connected with the sign Leo through its attribution to the letter Teth. Some of the profound alchemical significance of this Key has been touched on elsewhere in this course. It also has links of connection with the central mystery of Freemasonry. . . the raising of the dead body of Hiram Abiff by means of the "strong grip of the lion's paw." In the Masonic legend, Hiram's body was at an advanced stage of putrefaction when it was raised. This is a direct reference to the alchemical doctrine that the materials of the Great Work must be utterly decomposed before they can be raised, or sublimated.

חורם אביו, the Hebrew spelling of Hiram Abiff, is the number 273. This is also the number of אבן סאסו הבונים, ehben masu ha-bonim, "the stone which the builders refused" (Psalm 118:22). Careful consideration of these words may lead some of our Masonic readers to discover a clue to the true significance of the substitute for the Lost Word. The syllables of the substitute are concealed in these three words. Note also that Hiram, the "rejected Stone," was the son of a widow woman of



the Tribe of Naphtali. This tribe is associated by Qabalists with the zodiacal sign Virgo, so important in alchemy.

That this rejected Stone, after being reduced through "burial" to an advanced state of putrefaction, or decomposition, is "raised" by Solomon, using the "grip of the lion's paw," indicates clearly the function of the aspect of the secret fire which is connected with the sign Leo. King Solomon is a personification of the alchemical Sun. The sign Leo governs the heart and the spinal cord. It is by rising, through the central channel of the spinal cord that the serpent power coiled at the base of the spine reaches the brain.

That serpent power is what is symbolized by the letter Teth, corresponding to Key 8. Long ago it was said by Madam Blavatsky that this letter represents the vital electricity which she designated by its Tibetan name, Fohat. To make the serpent power rise, there must be also the action of the secret fire which enters the body in its undifferentiated state, as we have explained elsewhere, through the center above and behind the heart.

When the forces of the lower centers are decomposed or dissolved by the work of the alchemist, then the lion power entering by way of the heart provides the impetus needed to complete the sublimation. It is thus that the "Stone" is raised from its state of putrefaction.

As a consequence, there comes about a new comprehension, a new mental grasp of the meaning of experience. This mental grasp is the "grip of the lion's paw" which raises us from "death" to conscious immortality.

Finally, the temple which was nearing completion when Hiram Abiff was murdered was built on Mount Moriah. The bearing of this on our present study is that the words  
 הַמֹּרְיָה הָרַ, ha-Moriah har, "Mount Moriah," add up to 471. This is the  
 value of אֶלֶף-שֵׁן, Aleph-Shin, the Qabalistic spelling of אֵשׁ, Esh, fire,  
 "in plenitude."

The implication of this Qabalism is that the "temple" is erected on a foundation of fire. This is confirmed by the fact that Moriah means "seen of Jah." Thus "Mount Moriah" signifies "The hill of the Divine Vision." Furthermore, Jah, or יָה, is the special Divine Name attributed to the Sephirah Chokmah, which is also the "Root of Fire." And, according to the yogis, the Tejas or Agni Tattva is the subtle principle of sight.



# THE GREAT WORK

## THE ELEMENT OF FIRE (4)

### Lesson Twenty

Key 14, Temperance, corresponds to the letter Samekh, to which is attributed the mutable, fiery sign Sagittarius. The letter Samekh is also the number 60. This is the value of the verb **בָּחַן**, bakhan, "to try or to test," having special reference to the testing of metals by fire. As a noun, **בֵּית** means "a watch-tower," and, with different vowel-points, signifies "trial," or "proof."

Very likely this particular example of Gematria was in the minds of the Qabalists who attributed to the letter Samekh the Path of Wisdom called "Intelligence of Probation or Trial." On the Tree of Life, the path of Samekh is the second channel leading upward along the Middle Pillar, having its lower end in Yesod (which is represented in Key 14 by the pool at the bottom of the picture), and its upper terminus in Tiphareth. Thus this is the path which joins the subconscious powers of the Vital Soul (Nephesh in Yesod) to the superconscious activities of the Higher Self, or true Ego (Ruach in Tiphareth).

Consider what we have just said in conjunction with the instruction given in the MASTER PATTERN lessons concerning Nephesh and the central Ego. Note particularly that the path of the letter Samekh is divided into two equal parts by the horizontal path of the letter Peh, corresponding to Key 16, the Tower.

Below the path of Peh is the whole region of human personality corresponding to the Vital Soul and the physical body. The powers active in this region are subconscious, and man shares them with the rest of the animal kingdom.

The path of Peh joins Netzach and Hod, the two Sephiroth which, in human personality, are the seats, respectively, of self-conscious desire and intellect. If we do not rise above this level, we are imprisoned in the tower of the delusion of personal separateness; but when the lightning-flash from the superconscious level destroys this prison of delusion, we become aware that the central Ego in Tiphareth is really the One Self of which innumerable human beings are personal instruments of expression, just as any number of radio receivers may, at the same time, speak with the voice of a single broadcaster. Thus the upper part of the path of Samekh lies within the field of superconscious activity.

What is pictured in Key 16 by the flash of lightning is the descent of the secret fire through the path of Samekh. In Key 14, the same secret fire is pictured as the torch in the angel's left hand, and as the lion couchant on the angel's right side.

Returning now to 60, the number of Samekh, we find that this is also the value of the noun **כֵּלִי**, keliy, signifying "anything completed, prepared or made." Specifically, it means "vase or vessel," and this refers to the secret vessels of alchemy. In Key 14 this word is plainly indicated by the vase from which the angel pours water on the head of the lion. In older exoteric versions of this Key, the angel holds two vases and pours from one to the other a triple stream of water without spilling a drop. This is the "fiery,



threefold water" with which the Great Work is accomplished.

Of importance here is that Key 14 makes perfectly clear the truth that the alchemical work is not performed by the false, illusive, personal "self." Until the error of separateness is overcome, we seem to be moved by various desires. So long as the delusion continues, we seem to be making our plans for personal achievement, for greater freedom, for higher degrees of realization. When the work of the angel in Key 14 has raised one's consciousness above the level marked by the path of Peh, then one comes to see that the Great Work (like all other human activities) is truly the "Operation of the Sun."

At first, this realization may come in momentary flashes only, but, as the days pass, these flashes will be repeated often enough for the aspirant to remember their purport. From then on, however thick may be the veils of illusion, he will no longer be deluded by the appearance of separateness, no longer obsessed by the false notion of "personal" will.

Until this realization begins to take form in one's mind, the doctrine that no human personality does anything of itself seems to reduce us to the status of mere puppets---mere "figures in a moving row of shadow-shapes that come and go," as Omar Khayyam phrased it. Consequently, no teaching of Ageless Wisdom is more repugnant to an unawakened man than this. Even in books purporting to be devoted to spiritual instruction, there are often passages which show clearly that the writers are deluded by the phantasmal appearances of separateness and "personal" free-will.

The same delusion is behind the personal factions and personal loyalties which hinder the progress of many aspirants. This, again, is at the root of the widespread belief in the idea that human life is under the domination of external powers. Personal desires, or personalized external laws and forces, or even more or less blind and fatal forces like those of "environment," "heredity," "cosmic law," or "planetary vibrations"--all these belong in the same category. So do all endeavors to coerce or to cajole some power or powers supposed to be either above or below the level of human personality.

The great lesson is that of The Emerald Tablet: "All things are from ONE, by the mediation of (the same) ONE, and all things have their birth from this ONE THING, by adaptation." Furthermore, the Adapter is the Central Ego, pictured in Key 14 as the angel. He is the true Self of every human personality seated in the heart of every man and woman, incarnate or discarnate.

This is the Ego, in its aspect of immanence, or indwellingness. Yet the same Ego is transcendent also. It is equally present in all human lives. It dwells within us, yet it dwells also above and beyond the limitations of any particular personality however far advanced that personality may be.

Thus we are, every one of us, in continual touch with something truly more than man, as the unenlightened conceive man. Centering in us, it is also infinitely beyond the limits of the personal field, and infinitely beyond the attainments and potencies of even the greatest Masters.

Spartan indifference to pain and suffering deserve their meed of admiration. Stoical



refusal to be moved, whatever the event, has its place in man's unfoldment of spiritual consciousness. Self-reliance even in the mistaken sense in which the term is usually employed, must command respect.

What we seek, however, is more than indifference, more than endurance, more than uncomplaining patience in the midst of adversity. The human heart demands freedom, demands joy, demands a full, rich experience; and this demand is based on an intuitive perception that behind the outward shows of this great universe is a Living Mind, a spring of life truly described by the words which say God is the giver of every good and perfect gift.

Personal courage, personal determination to accept what comes without complaint, have undeniable and most admirable values. Yet there are some crises in every human life when these lesser virtues will not sustain us. They who are honest with themselves know this full well. They know it even when disgust with exoteric churchianity and its cant and pretense force them, in simple honesty, to repudiate the lie of a personal God who can be persuaded by flattery, by importunity, or by the self-abasement of his worshippers.

He who really understands this doctrine of the indwelling Self has no fear of becoming a puppet, moved by some outside power. He surrenders the delusions of personal will and personal activity as one might relinquish a counterfeit coin when offered a piece of genuine money. He gives up nothing but a lie, and, having emptied himself of delusion, finds himself filled with truth. More than this, when full grasp of this truth comes, he knows that even the surrender was not "his" in the personal sense. When the time arrives, the Central Ego turns the vase of personality upside down to free it from all delusion, and then fills the empty vessel with the living, fluidic fire of spiritual knowledge which brings liberation.

The Hebrew name for the zodiacal sign Sagittarius, corresponding to Key 14, is קֶשֶׁת, qesheth, "the bow." In Key 14, the symbol for this is the rainbow over the head of the angel.

The number of this word is 800, which is also the value of the letter Peh in its final form (ף), used always when Peh comes at the end of a word. This is the letter of Mars, and designates the Mars center in the human body.

This is the center which stimulates the reproductive organs. It is the same as the Svadisthana chakra of the yogis. In the yoga doctrine, this center is said to be the seat of the Apas Tattva, and, since Apas is the Tattva of water, we have here another instance of the apparent confusion of fire with water which we noticed in connection with the presence of the angel Gabriel in Key 20.

In Key 14, moreover, water is prominent in the symbolism, and the same element is associated with the rainbow. So also, in Key 16, which represents the Mars force, we see storm clouds, implying that the fiery flash which destroys the tower is connected with water.



Again, the number 800 is that of שרש, shoresh, "a root," indicating that whatever significance there may be in the word קשת, gesheth, "the bow," will lead us to a better understanding of that which is the root, or fundamental reality, from which spring all forms of growth and development.

Years of familiarity with this material have, no doubt, made it easier for some of us to follow these Qabalistic clues to the occult doctrine of the secret fire. Just as an Apache tracker can discern marks on a trail which have no meaning for the average passer-by, so does one who has devoted years to making himself acquainted with the symbolic language of Qabalah see plain indications where another will perceive nothing at all.

We believe, nevertheless, that when the clues are pointed out, as they are in these lessons, their meaning will be apparent to every qualified student. He who is really in earnest in his desire to master the secrets of the Hermetic Art will be able, if he thinks the matter through, to penetrate the veils of symbolism, and come to the truth of the matter.

Remember, however, that the most important secrets of the Great Work cannot be expressed in ordinary words. We would be glad to tell some of them, if telling were possible. No human language includes the necessary terms. Certain metaphors there are, and certain symbols like those of Tarot, which, if made subjects of meditation, will bring a student to the point where knowledge dawns upon him. Then all words and symbols will take on new meaning. Then will he understand that there is truly a magical language, and that, like other tongues, it does serve as a means of communication among persons who understand it.

A good deal of nonsense has been written about the "verbal juggling" of the technical Qabalah. The truth about the Hebrew and Greek number-letter systems (as well as about the Latin Gematria of some of the later occult texts) is well expressed by I. Muraskin, who says, in his introduction to Harry Waton's valuable book, *THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE KABBALAH*: "Far from being arbitrary word juggling, the technical Kabbalah constitutes a well ordered mathematical system, in no wise inferior to our own system of symbolic logic."

Furthermore, even juggling calls for and develops dexterity, so that if nothing more were brought about by this technique of permutation, transposition, and numbering of words and letters, it would be worth doing for the sake of the mental agility and flexibility which it certainly does effect.

What results from this kind of practice is an unusual development of the power of associating ideas. The numeral correspondences among words are merely signals which arrest attention. On the surface, the words have often no obvious relation to one another; but when we find they have the same number, we look for connecting links among the ideas connected with the words.

We find, moreover, that words of opposite meaning have often the same numeral value. Thus identity of numeration is by no means to be understood as identity of meaning. Yet these words of contrasting or antithetical meaning are often complementary as well as opposite; and in any fairly large Qabalistic dictionary one finds many exam-



ples of such complementary contrasts having identical numbers.

Often, such contrasting words may be reconciled by a third. A good example is afforded by the contrasting words אהבה, ahovah, "love," and איב, ayab, "hate," both adding to 13. Hate and love are exact opposites. Yet nothing is more true than the fact that our thoughts are firmly fixed on anybody we hate. What is more binding than thorough aversion?

Love and hate are but opposite poles of the same basic emotion, and this has been abundantly demonstrated by the best among our modern psychologists. Hence we find in Qabalah that the word אחד, echad, "unity," is also the number 13, and stands for the identification which may result from hate as well as from love. Here is a Qabalistic example of the transcendental logic which Ouspensky, in TERTIUM ORGANUM, expresses thus: "Everything is both A and Not-A at one and the same time."

Remember what Paracelsus said concerning the "use of the Qabalists," if sometimes you are inclined to chafe a little at our frequent references to Gematria. The only way to know the "use of the Qabalists" is by exercising one's mind in their peculiar system of symbolic logic.

When one begins, he is like a child learning to read. He is so occupied with his endeavors to pronounce single words that the story they tell makes little or no impression on his mind. This difficulty he overcomes by dint of repetition. Eventually, letters and words are lost sight of in the interest which is aroused by the story.

This is just as true of Tarot symbols and Qabalistic correspondences as it is of the more familiar symbols of daily speech. We do not learn them for themselves. We are studying them so that we may learn what may be conveyed by them, and in no other manner so satisfactory.

In closing this fourth lesson of the series dealing with alchemical fire, let us summarize:

1. The fire of the alchemists is closely related to the First Matter, since, as Paracelsus declares, it is "the principal subject of this Art."
2. Some call it a "common" fire, meaning that it is common to all things.
3. It is not the ordinary fire of physical combustion, but a hidden energy characterized by its power of vivifying.
4. It is identical with the STONE.
5. It is one thing, from one root.
6. In many respects it resembles a fluid, so that alchemical writers often disguise it by the name water.
7. It is silent and invisible.
8. It is not generated, but manifested by the alchemical work.



9. It is purely natural, but the excitation of it is artificial.
10. It is the cause of the three principles, and of all that can be named.
11. According to Boehme, this fire is the root of light which is generated from it.
12. It is God Himself. ("The Lord our God is a consuming fire.")
13. It is the power which forms the physical body of man.
14. It is identical with Ruach, the Life-Breath (also Prana, Pneuma and Spiritus.)
15. This fire is what raises the "dead" (in the esoteric sense), as pictured in Key 20.
16. The Great Work is the means whereby this resurrection is accomplished.
17. In the human body, where it becomes the subject of the alchemical operation, this fire is especially active in the nerve centers and organs which are concerned with the function of reproduction. It is active also in other centers as heretofore explained.
18. The alchemical fire is represented by the first letter of the Tetragrammaton, **יהוה**, consequently it is identical with the life-force in the human organism, because to this first letter of **יהוה** Qabalists attribute the second aspect of reality, Chokmah, which is the seat of **חיה**, Chaiah, the life-force.

Consider these points carefully. Read this series of four lessons several times in order to plant deep in your subconsciousness the seed-thoughts of the alchemical doctrine of fire. Then give the seed-thoughts time to germinate.

Nobody learns alchemy altogether from lectures, lessons or books. The spoken and the written word are but means to awaken the subconscious process of deduction. In these four lessons you have been provided with some of the most important declarations of the sages concerning what they always call "their" fire. Let your inner consciousness develop their doctrine into the ripe fruit of understanding and realization.

The next group of four lessons will deal with the alchemical doctrine concerning water.



## THE GREAT WORK

### THE ELEMENT OF WATER (1)

#### Lesson Twenty-one

Alchemists agree that the element of water contains the potencies of all forms of manifestation. Often they call it "Mother," and, in the account of creation given in Genesis, water is clearly shown to be the First Matter of the world. There we read: "The Life-Breath of the Creative Powers brooded upon the face of the waters." The consequence of that brooding was the bringing-forth of the world.

In order to understand the element of water, we shall have to give some space to what is said of it by Qabalists. In so doing, we shall have to consider the meaning of several Biblical passages.

Yet the reader should understand that this inquiry has nothing whatever to do with creedal or theological theories. There is an arcane science concealed by the letter of the Scriptures. It is with this that we are concerned, and the results of our inquiry into the inner meaning of the Bible will sometimes take us a long way from received opinions of exoteric religion. The great Hebrew texts on alchemy are in the Bible, and our examination of them will be restricted to their alchemical meaning. What we learn from this study may, or may not, modify some of our religious opinions, but what we are seeking now is knowledge rather than confirmation of any religious belief.

Genesis is a poetical Hebrew synthesis of several ancient creation stories. A good many modern critics believe it was written after, rather than before, the Children of Israel were held in captivity by the Babylonians. Yet it is only fair to say that other profound students of the Hebrew text do not subscribe to this opinion.

What seems to be undeniable is that the long years of captivity had a marked influence on Hebrew ideas. Babylon, in those days, was a great center of culture. Sages and philosophers from Persia, India, Egypt and China came there to learn the wisdom of which we catch glimpses in the story of the prophet Daniel. Thus it is not to be wondered at that traces of Far Eastern ideas may be found embedded in the text of the Old Testament.

The first verse of Genesis tells of an act of separation. The verb translated "created" in the King James version means literally, "to cut out, to cut apart." Not the production of something from nothing, but rather the establishment of divisions, distinctions and boundaries, is what is related in the opening words of the Bible.

The first separation marks the distinction between heaven and earth. Hebrew grammarians trace the noun שָׁמַיִם, shamaim, "heavens," to an obsolete root meaning "to be high." The "heaven" is literally "what is heaved up." It is the superior term of the first great pair of opposites: that which is above.

Contrasted with it is אֶרֶץ, eretz, "the earth." This noun comes from a root meaning "low, inferior," Hence, at the beginning of the Christian Era, a person we should now describe as belonging to the "lower classes" was called by the Jews am ha-eretz, that is, "man of earth." Thus, "earth" stands for the inferior term of the first pair of opposites: that which is below.



The superior term, heaven, is designated by a word of profound occult meaning. It is שָׁמַיִם, shamaim, and, by every analogy of Hebrew construction, its real significance should be "names." For the Hebrew שֵׁם, shem, which means "name, word, sign," is a masculine noun, and the usual sign for the masculine plural in Hebrew is the suffix ִים, -im.

Actually, however, this masculine noun שֵׁם, shem, takes the feminine plural suffix, וֹת, oth. By this device the priestly writers who invented written Hebrew as a secret code, whereby sacerdotal mysteries might be concealed from all but initiates, made a distinction between the Creative NAME and all lesser names derived from it. The NAME is shamaim, and is written in the plural known to scholars as "the plural of majesty."

Even in our English usage we use the word "Heaven" as synonymous with "God." So it should not be difficult to understand that the Creative NAME, or the WORD, is what is really indicated by shamaim, שָׁמַיִם.

The Inner School was active in the days when the Hebrew text of Genesis was written, and is no less active in our time. (This Genesis text was written in the so-called "Square Hebrew" letters which are really of Babylonian origin.) Then as now, the Inner School supervised the writing of all sacred scriptures. Then as now, it adopted whatever means were felt to be necessary to secure inviolate the transmission of Ageless Wisdom.

Thus there is hidden below the surface of the Genesis story the same doctrine of the Creative Thought, the same doctrine of the Word, which appeared also in the writings of certain Greek philosophers, in the beginning of the Gospel according to St. John, and in later Qabalism.

This is the doctrine that the power "which is above," the superior power in the universe, is the power of the Creative Word. Throughout the Old Testament, passage after passage celebrates the Name. Solomon, we read, built his temple to this Name. In the last verse of the seventeenth chapter of St. John's Gospel, Jesus is reported as summing up his whole ministry in the words, "I have declared unto them thy name," thus clearly indicating how important he felt that Name to be.

The first letter of שָׁמַיִם, shamaim, is Shin (שׁ), the "holy letter." It stands for the element of fire, and, because its value is 300, represents Ruach Elohim, the Creative Life-Breath, since 300 is also the value of רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים. This Life-Breath, we read, brooded on the face of the waters.

Those waters are represented by the letters מים, which complete the noun shamaim. They spell the name of the thirteenth Hebrew letter, signifying "water." Thus the Hebrew noun for "heaven" represents not only the Creative Word, but also the combination of spiritual fire (שׁ) with the element of water (מים).

Alchemists represent fire by the symbol of an equilateral triangle with its point upward, and water by an equilateral triangle pointing downward. Thus a word which combines these two ideas may be symbolized by the interlaced triangles which are recog-



nized everywhere as the distinctive emblem of Israel, just as the cross is the characteristic symbol of Christianity.

The upright triangle is masculine, and the reversed triangle is feminine. Fire is Father, and water is Mother. Consequently, the word shamaim suggests male and female. We find confirmation of this in the fact that the value of the words זכר ונקבה, zawkawr ve-nekaybaw, "male and female," (Genesis 1:27) is 390, which is also the value of shamaim.

In contrast to the "heaven," Genesis goes on to describe the earth, and in the second verse of the first chapter, this earth, which is "that which is below," is described first of all as תהו ובהו, tohu va-bohu, "without form and void." The mental image suggested is that of a vast abyss of fluid darkness. It should be compared with the saying of Buddha, reported in the Surangama Sutra: "The intrinsic nature of earth is the real emptiness, while the intrinsic nature of space is the real earth-essence."

Another comment on this is the passage in Isaiah 45:7, which says Jehovah creates the darkness, and speaks of light as being formed. By comparing Isaiah's statement with Genesis 1:3, it will be evident that the Lord or Logos is the formative power.

In Genesis 1:2, the abyss of the waters is called תהום, and the number of this word is 451. 451 is also the number of את האדם, eth ha-adam, translated simply "man" in the Authorized Version of Genesis 1:27. A more accurate translation is "essence of man." By this Gematria the "great deep," or dark abyss of primal water, is Qabalistically identified with the idea of the universal essence of the human race. Certain characteristics of this essence of man are indicated by the fact that 451 corresponds also to ישמעאל, Ishmael, Abraham's oldest son, and to מיתא, mithaw, "death."

In the fourth chapter of his Epistle to the Galatians, St. Paul says the story of Sarah and Hagar is an allegory. St. Paul was an initiate who knew the oral tradition as well as the written word. Under the celebrated Rabbi Gamaliel, he had been given careful instruction which included the allegorical exegesis of the Hebrew Scriptures. We may be sure he knew the esoteric meaning of the "great deep," and its relation to the element of water, as well as to the essence of man.

In Galatians he likens the law of Sinai, "which gendereth to bondage," to Ishmael, the son of Hagar. In the twenty-first verse of the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, he wrote: "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead."

Remember, this was written by a Hebrew of the Tribe of Benjamin, who thought the Hebrew noun אדם, Adam, as he wrote the Greek anthropos, while composing this letter. Students of Tarot should note here that the 13th Key, entitled "Death" (which is מיתא, mithaw, in later Hebrew), is related to the element of water because it symbolizes the watery sign Scorpio.

In the B.O.T.A. version of this Key, part of the symbolism is a conventionalized representation of a seed. The instruction concerning this Key in our earlier lessons should be reviewed in connection with your present study of the element of water.



There are two other Qabalistic equivalents for the number 451. The first is the phrase יהוה עשה כל, Jehovah oseh kole, "Jehovah who maketh all." The second is אתם, atten, "you, yourselves," the feminine second person, plural pronoun. Jehovah is commonly thought of as being masculine. The truth, of course, is that God transcends all distinctions of gender. Yet the actual working power, which is the essence of the dark, void abyss, and the essence also of primordial humanity, is always represented as being feminine. Hence the alchemical symbol for water is an equilateral triangle pointing downward, in contrast to the symbol for fire, an equilateral triangle pointing upward.

In the next lesson of this series, we shall consider what some of the alchemists have written concerning the element of water.

Forget not that these two,  
Though they be named superior and inferior,  
Are in truth of equal rank.

As it is written:

"That which is below is as that which is above,  
And that which is above is as that which is below."

Be thou not led astray by their false doctrine  
Who ascribe to the inferior nature  
Somewhat less of power and worth  
Than inhereth in the superior.  
The two are as the pans of a balance.  
Each hath its own peculiar quality.  
Each hath its appointed sphere of operation.  
One cometh not before the other,  
But together they exist  
From everlasting to everlasting.

(From the BOOK OF TOKENS by Dr. Paul Foster Case.)



# THE GREAT WORK

## THE ELEMENT OF WATER (2)

### Lesson Twenty-Two

The down-pointing equilateral triangle is one of many symbols for the female aspect of generation. It is thus employed all over the world. As the original form of the Greek letter Delta, the equivalent of Hebrew Daleth, it is connected with the symbolism of the Empress in Tarot. She represents the planet Venus, and is therefore connected with alchemical copper.

Venus is a water deity, for she is said to have been born of the foam of the sea. Compare this with what is said in Lesson 5. There it is stated by two adepts that the tincture is made from Venus. In the same lesson we find Arnold Villanova saying the First Matter is rightly named water.

Plate 13 of THE SECRET SYMBOLS OF THE ROSICRUCIANS, representing the Hermetic philosophy, shows a blue water triangle marked Fons Miraculorum, "Fountain of Miracles." In it are rooted a red rose, representing the "red work" of alchemy, and a white lily which symbolizes the "white work." The rose is a symbol for the solar current. The lily stands for the lunar current. Yet both are rooted in the water triangle which is the fountain of miracles. Thus, if we remember the phrasing of THE EMERALD TABLET, we shall know that the element of water is the "One Thing" which is the primary substance for all miraculous manifestations.

In TURBA PHILOSOPHORUM it is said: "The ignorant, when they hear us name water, think it is water of the clouds; but, if they understood our books, they should know it to be a permanent or fixed water, without which its Sulphur--to which it hath been united--cannot be permanent."

Thomas Vaughan declares: "Our subject is no common water, but a thick, slimy, fat earth. This earth must be dissolved in water, and that water must be congealed again into earth." This short statement contains one of the clearest and most accurate descriptions of the actual material used in alchemy, and of the process whereby it is manipulated. The same adept writes also: "Among visible things the water first shone forth; this was the fruitful mother of figurable things, the feminine in correspondence with the masculine of indwelling fire."

Sendivogius said: "Our water is a heavenly water, which wets not the hand, not that of the common man, but almost, as it were, pluvial." The adjective "pluvial" means literally "rainy," but the context denies that alchemical water is the ordinary fluid which falls from the clouds. The meaning is that the alchemical water descends in drops. It is heavenly, that is to say metaphysical or hyperphysical, yet it does assume a drop-like or corpuscular form. (Note, also, that, as heavenly, alchemical water, as we saw in Lesson 21, is related to Shamaim, "the heavens.")

Raymond Lully is even more specific in his indication that the water of the sages is not common water. "It hath the likeness of the sun and moon," he writes, "and in such



water it hath appeared unto us." The sun is a "likeness" or presentation of this water, and so is the moon. Both are luminaries and this should enable you to understand that alchemical water has the fundamental nature of light. We are able, therefore, to identify the heavenly water as being that current of energy whose flux and reflux is the agency of all manifestation, presented to the human eye in the forms of sun, moon and stars.

Another alchemist tells us: "As the world was generated out of that water, upon which the Spirit of God did move, all things proceeding from thence, both celestial and terrestrial, so this philosophical chaos is generated out of a certain water that is not common, not out of dew, nor air condensed in the caverns of the earth, nor artificially in the receiver; nor out of water drawn from the sea, fountains, pits, or rivers, but out of a certain tortured water, that hath suffered some alteration obvious to all, but known to few. This water hath in it all that is necessary for the perfection of the philosophical work, without any extrinsical addition."

Observe the word "tortured." Its root is a Latin verb, meaning "to twist." Because they pursued methods of research different from those of the modern scientist who studies phenomena occurring outside his body, the alchemists came sooner to realize that whatever exists is actually the result of torsion or twisting, that is to say, of spiral motion in the primary energy whence all things proceed. The alchemical water is that same energy in its aspect of substance.

Through twisting, it suffers an alteration which is said to be "obvious to all," because the forms produced by this alteration confront all men as the conditions of physical existence. Yet this alteration is "known to few," because the meaning of the world of forms is hidden from all but a few persons living in any generation. Finally, it is said that this water contains whatever is necessary, without any extrinsical addition, because it is the all-pervading substance, so that there is no "outside" from which anything additional may be drawn.

In his MYSTERIUM, Jacob Boehme says: "When I behold the external water, I am forced to say, 'Here in the water below the firmament is also contained water from above the firmament.' But the firmament is in the middle, and the link between time and eternity, so that neither one of them is the other. By means of the external eyes, or the eyes of this world, I see only the water below the firmament; but the water above the firmament is that which God in Christ has instituted for the baptism of regeneration."

In AURORA he writes: "The water of life became separated from the water of death; but in such a way that in the time of this world they are linked together like body and soul. But the heaven, having been made from the middle part of the water, is like an abyss between the two, so that the conceivable water is a death, but the inconceivable one is the life.

"The water upon the earth is a degenerated and deadly being, like the earth herself. The material water, contained within the most external generation, has been separated from the inconceivable one."

In ANTHROPOSOPHIA THEOMAGICA Thomas Vaughan also says: "I am now to



speak of the Water. This is the first element we read of in Scripture, the most ancient of principles and the Mother of all things among visibles. Without the mediation of this, the Earth can receive no blessing at all, for moisture is the proper cause of mixture and fusion. The Water hath several complexions (understand here "combinations in various proportions") according to the several parts of the creature. Here below, and in the circumference of all things, it is volatile, crude, and raw. For this very cause Nature makes it no part of her provision, but she rectifies it first, exhaling it up with her heat, and thus condensing it into rains and dews, in which state she makes use of it for nourishment. Somewhere it is interior, vital, and celestial, exposed to the breath of the First Agent, and stirred with spiritual, eternal winds. In this condition it is Nature's wanton--Foemina Satacissima, as one calls it. This is that Psyche of Apuleius, and the Fire of Nature is her Cupid. He that hath seen them both in the same bed will confess that love rules all. But to speak something of our common, elemental Water. It is not altogether contemptible; there are hidden treasures in it, but so enchanted we cannot see them, for all the chest is transparent. 'The congelated spirit of the Invisible Water is better than the whole earth,' saith the noble and learned Sendivogius. I do not advise the reader to take this phlegm to task, as if he would extract a Venus from the sea, but I wish him to study Water that he may know the Fire."

Finally, Paracelsus writes: "The first matter of minerals consists of water; and it comprises only Sulphur, Salt and Mercury. These minerals are that element's spirit and soul, containing in themselves all minerals, metals, gems, salts, and other things of that kind, like different seeds in a bag."

The chemical formula for ordinary water is  $H_2O$ , or two parts of Hydrogen to one of oxygen. Recently it has been discovered that there are two kinds of hydrogen atoms, one heavier than the other, and, by isolating the heavy atoms, it has been possible to make a "heavy" water which differs from ordinary water in several particulars. Plants and tadpoles are poisoned by it, and it appears to have certain other properties which are engaging the interest of research chemists. Yet even this "heavy" water is a compound of hydrogen and oxygen.

Though not resembling the metals physically, hydrogen is like metals in that it is electro-positive, and is the positive ion of all acids. Chemically, hydrogen is the typical monad, or universal element. Oxygen is eight-ninths, by weight, of ordinary water, and nearly one-half, by weight, of the rocks composing the earth's crust. Liquid oxygen is strongly magnetic. Thus even ordinary water is a compound of elements having the characteristic qualities of the alchemical "sun" and the alchemical "moon," for the former, like hydrogen, is electro-positive, and the latter, like liquid oxygen, is invariably distinguished as being magnetic.

These facts, brought to light by modern chemical research, confirm the alchemical dictum that water is the seed and root of all metals. Yet we must remember that alchemical water is not precisely the same as  $H_2O$ . One clue to its real nature is the oft-repeated declaration that it is a "heavenly" water, which "does not wet the hand." It is hyperphysical, or heavenly, in its inner nature, yet it does give rise to phenomena which make their appearance on the physical plane.



The methods whereby the sages arrived at their knowledge were not those of the modern chemist. Yet their conclusions are in many particulars the same, because their methods were truly practical. Instead of observing chemical reactions in test-tubes and retorts, they studied the forces of nature directly, utilizing a higher order of perception. Thus they discovered the existence of an all-pervading element which flows, which has currents, which falls on earth in drop-like forms, and which presents itself to the physical eye as the sun and moon.

This element they symbolized by precisely the same figure as that which they used for fire--an equilateral triangle. But they turned the point of the triangle downward. By so doing, they indicated that when it manifests as the element of water, the One Thing, or Single Force, moves, so to say, in a direction opposite to that which it takes when it manifests as the element of fire.

Thus Paracelsus says: "Know, then, that the ultimate and also the primal matter of everything is fire, This is, as it were, the key that locks the chest. It is this which makes manifest whatever is hidden in anything." The fire is the One Thing mentioned in THE EMERALD TABLET. When it ascends from earth to heaven it is symbolized by the upright triangle, and by various other emblems mentioned heretofore.

When this same force descends to earth, it is represented by a triangle pointed downward. Thus, at the very beginning of this study, we learn that alchemical water is that movement of the One Force which is described by THE EMERALD TABLET thus: "Its power is integrating, if it be turned into earth." That is to say, alchemical water is the form-producing aspect or operation of the One Thing.

Hence Qabalists represent this element by the second letter of the Tetragrammaton, יהוה. In Qabalistic books we read: "Creation took place with the letter Heh (ה)." This second letter of יהוה is also the symbol for the "World of Creation," בריאה, Briah; and it corresponds also to the third of the ten numbered emanations, the Sephirah Binah, which is understood to be the form-producing agency, known as אֵם, Aima, or Imma, the Mother, and as the "Great Sea," which is said to be the "Root of Water."

When we speak of alchemical water as being metaphysical or hyperphysical, we are by no means implying that it is merely an intellectual abstraction. It is just as real as physical water, just as actual as a brick. We use the term "metaphysical" in a special and literal sense. By this adjective we mean "existing beyond (meta) the range of physical sensation." In the Qabalistic philosophy which the alchemists adapted to their special purposes, the highest metaphysical reality is called Ain, or No-Thing; Ain Suph, or the Limitless; and Ain Suph Aur, or Limitless Light. These names are intended to indicate the state of the One Reality prior to the beginning of a cycle of manifestation. They are called "Veils of the Absolute," because Qabalists understand perfectly well that any description or definition of the Absolute must necessarily conceal, or veil, its true nature.

Yet the Absolute of the Qabalists is not an abstraction. It is not the result of specu-



lative philosophizing. It is a Reality which has been directly experienced by the sages to whom it is something truly known, even though it is also something which remains ineffable because there are no human words to describe it.

Just below that aspect of One Reality which is termed Ain Suph Aur, the Limitless Light, is the "octave," or "field," or what some call the "world," and others the "plane," which Qabalists name Atziluth, the archetypal world. It is related to the element of fire, and is attributed to the first letter of יהוה. It would be correct to say, therefore, that alchemical fire is the metaphysical substance of the archetypal world, and that alchemical water is the metaphysical substance of Briah, the creative world.

We have just explained that the symbol for alchemical water is identical with the symbol for alchemical fire except that its direction is reversed. This identity of alchemical water with alchemical fire is declared also by the sages. They say, for example, "Philosophers burn with water." And Synesius writes: "I advise thee, my son, to make no account of other things; labour only for that water which burns to blackness, dissolves, and congeals." Other writers call this same water "golden," which is to say "solar," because gold and sun are equivalent in alchemy.

In the Hebrew alphabet, the sign corresponding to water is the second of the three "Mother" letters, the letter מ, Mem. Its name is a plural, signifying literally "seas," but the word has also the generic significance "water." The value of the letter-name מ is 90. The single character, מ, corresponding to English "M"; has the value 40. In Tarot, it is symbolized by the twelfth Key, the Hanged Man.

As a preparation for the next lesson, review what has been said in TAROT FUNDAMENTALS and in THIRTY-TWO PATHS concerning this letter Mem and the path of wisdom to which it corresponds.

Your next lesson will begin with a study of some of the Gematria of the numbers 40 and 90. From this preliminary study of what the "magical language" can tell us about water, we shall go on to a further, and most interesting, development.



THE GREAT WORK  
THE ELEMENT OF WATER (3)

Lesson Twenty-three

Beginning with the number 40, we find that it is the value of the verb **גזל**, gawzal, meaning primarily, "to cut off, to take away, to strip off," as skin from the flesh. Here is a direct reference to what is implied by the alchemical idea that the element of water is the source of form, and that it is associated with the creative letter, **Heh**. Since all things are manifestations of one Reality, besides which there is nothing else whatever, it follows that what seems to be the multiplication of forms is only the apparent subdivision of the One into various parts. So the verb **ברא**, bawraw, which is usually rendered as "create," also means primarily "to cut out, to cut apart." This agrees with what has been said elsewhere in this course concerning the diversifying power of the Sephirah Binah, which is the Root of Water.

Again, 40 is the number of the word **חבל**. As a verb, chawbal, it means: 1. to twist, to wind together, to bind; 2. to pledge; 3. to pervert, to damage. As a noun, cheybeyl, it means: 1. a cord, a rope; 2. pain, sorrow; 3. a measuring line; 4. a snare. Compare the first of these meanings with the words of Vaughan, quoted elsewhere: "Moisture is the proper cause of mixture and fusion."

This mixture is a breaking-up of the "still calm of Pure Being;" thus there is a sense in which the original purity of the subsisting One is damaged or destroyed by the creative process. Thus we hear over and over again that the One Life sacrifices itself for the sake of manifestation. We hear, too, that limitation and measurement are inseparable from creation; that the world of appearances resulting from the creative process is a scene of pain and sorrow; and that this world is a delusion and a snare to those who misapprehend the meaning of its appearances.

A third Hebrew word corresponding to 40 is **חלב**, chawlawb, "milk." With different vowels, the same letters make the word cheyleyb, which signifies: 1. fatness; 2. super-abundance; 3. the best part of anything. Here we are reminded that what some alchemists call "Water," is by others termed "Virgin's Milk." According to Vaughan, fatness is a characteristic of alchemical water. Again, it is from this element of water that the wise derive all their supplies of substance for manifestation as external forms, and our quotation from Synesius seems to indicate that this water is the best part, or most desirable thing.

A fourth correspondence to 40 is the Hebrew idiom, **יְרֵי יְהוָה**, Yod Tetragrammaton, which means literally, "the hand of Jehovah," but actually signifies the formative power of the One Reality. Thus we may understand that alchemical water is the agency or power whereby the One Reality projects its creative energy into specific forms.

Turning now to the correspondences to 90, the number of the noun **דָּמָם**, the first is **דָּמָם**, domom, "in silence." This is directly connected with the letter Mem, which is said by Qabalists to be "mute, like water."



The second correspondence to 90 is יָכִין, Jachin, the name of one of the pillars before the porch of Solomon's temple. This word, familiar to Freemasons, signifies, according to some, "firm one, strong one, patron." In Masonry it is interpreted as meaning, "He will establish," and has, therefore, much the same underlying significance as יְהוָה, Yod Tetragrammaton. The noun Jachin is from a Semitic root meaning "unity," and refers to the creative power of the One Thing.

A third correspondence to the number 90 is the word מֶלֶךְ. As a verb, mawlak, it means "to administer, to reign, to rule, to counsel." As a noun, meyleyk, it means "king, ruler, prince." Thus it conveys the ideas of royalty, command, and the like. The alchemical water is actually the agency whereby the rule or administration of the Life-power is established over all forms and conditions of manifested being.

A fourth correspondence to 90 is the proper name לֶמֶךְ, Lamech. This is important in Masonry also, since Lamech is the name of the Biblical character (Gn.4:18) who, according to Masonic tradition, was the father of that ancient craft. In this connection, it is interesting to note that the Greek spelling of this name, as used in the New Testament, is Λαμεχ, having the value 676, the square of 26, the number indicated by the Divine Name יהוה. The literal meaning of the name Lamech is "powerful." Its traditional connection with Freemasonry, and the correspondence of its Greek equivalent with 676, are indications (however slight they may seem to persons unversed in the subtleties of Qabalah) that the alchemical water is somehow related to all things having to do with creation and construction--with the building of form.

Paracelsus says: "The first principle with God was the ultimate matter which He Himself made to be the primal, just as a fruit which produces another fruit. It has seed; and this seed ranks as primal matter. Likewise, out of the ultimate matter of minerals the primal element was made, that is, it was made into seed, which seed is the element of water . . . So, then, the element of water is the mother, seed, and root of all minerals; and the Archeus therein is he who disposes everything according to a definite order, so that each comes to its ultimate matter, which at length man receives as a sort of artificial primal matter; that is, where Nature ends, there the Art of man begins, for Nature's ultimate matter is man's primal matter. After such a wonderful method has God created water as the first matter of Nature, so soft and weak a substance, yet from it as a fruit the most solid metal, stones, etc.--the very hardest from the very softest: -- and so that from the water fire should issue forth, beyond the grasp of man's intelligence, but not beyond the power of Nature."

The Archeus is the universal agent specialized in each distinct thing, creature and personality. By some it is understood to be the same as the Anima Mundi, or Soul of the World, and this Anima Mundi, which works at subconscious levels, is that principle which maintains and directs the growth of all living beings, sets all nature in motion, and is especially active in the reproduction and development of all organic forms.

In this connection, it is well to read carefully the writings of Judge Thomas Troward, particularly THE CREATIVE PROCESS IN THE INDIVIDUAL, THE HIDDEN POWER, and THE LAW AND THE WORD. Of all modern writers, this author sets forth most clearly the nature of the Anima Mundi, and indicates how, and for what reasons,



it must be distinguished from the higher spiritual soul. The Anima Mundi, which Paracelsus declares to be the Archeus in the primal water, is none other than the Maya-Shakti of Hindu philosophers. As the power which gives shape and form to all things, it is clearly the same as the finitizing principle of the Thomistic philosophy, represented in Qabalah by the Sephirah Binah, which is the Root of Water.

Binah is the Sphere of Saturn, and Saturn is the astrological correspondence to the finitizing principle. Saturn condenses, fixes, gives shape and form, materializes and restricts. Thus Saturn is connected with the alchemical idea of saltiness associated with the Great Sea of Binah. Yet, just as "finitizing" and "finishing" come from the same Latin root, so Saturn, as representing what establishes definite form, stands also for that which brings things to completion. This is one reason for symbolizing Saturn as an old man with a scythe. In Qabalah, the same thought is intimated by the attribution of the Sanctifying Intelligence to the third Sephirah, because a saint is a "just man made perfect."

To Binah Qabalists impute the power which gives concrete form to the spiritual potencies of the Life-power. This is the finitizing agency, Salt, characterizing what THE CHALDEAN ORACLES term "the lustral water of the loud-resounding Sea." For it must be remembered that even "fresh" water, like that in lakes and rivers, holds in solution minute quantities of salt which are concentrated in sea-water by the process of evaporation. From the sea, moreover, comes all the water which descends as rain, and thus Binah, the Great Sea, is also the Root (or Source) of Water.

Thus by our study of the Sephirah which is called the Sphere of Saturn, the Great Sea and Root of Water, the Mother, we find many indications that alchemical water is that aspect of the Life-power which gives definite form to all things. This is confirmed by the fact that the Qabalistic book on alchemy, AESCH METZAREPH, attributes Salt to Binah. The alchemical water is the Life-power in its aspect of substance, the principle of embodiment, as contrasted with the same Life-power in its aspect of energy, the principle of movement.

In AESCH METZAREPH, the element of water is attributed to Chesed, the fourth Sephirah, and to Hod, the eighth Sephirah. The same book also attributes Silver (Luna) to Chesed, and Copper (Venus) to Hod. One has only to remember the connection of the moon with the tides in order to see how anything connected with the moon must partake of the nature of water. Venus, also, is sea-born, and we have already noticed that the First Matter is sometimes termed Venus, and that it is also frequently called Water.

Here we must be on our guard. In our study of the Tree of Life, we found that Chesed is the Sphere of Jupiter, and that Hod is called the Sphere of Mercury. It will be remembered, also, that the sphere of a planet is not to be confused with the planet itself. Thus, when we learn that alchemical water and the moon are assigned to Chesed, and that the same element and Venus are assigned to Hod, what we should understand is this:

Water is the substance aspect of the First Matter, having its root or source in what is represented on the Tree of Life as Binah, to which Sephirah the principle Salt is also attributed. This substance aspect appears also in the fourth Sephirah. Hence, in THE



PATTERN ON THE TRESTLEBOARD, we associate Limitless Substance with Chesed.

In Chesed, the alchemical water takes the form of Silver, or Luna. Nevertheless, this metaphysical Luna is at the same time the field or sphere in which the operation of the power designated as Jupiter is at work. Even as the Sphere of Jupiter, Chesed is related to water, since Jove is the Lord of Rain, Jupiter Pluvius.

In the eighth Sephirah, the First Matter presents itself under the form of alchemical Copper, or Venus. Yet Hod is also the Sphere of Mercury, and the actual, physical metal Mercury is the only fluid, or watery, metal. These details require careful consideration, for they are clues to the right understanding of the whole mystery of alchemy.

We should use as our guide through all our Qabalistic and alchemical studies the key idea expressed by THE EMERALD TABLET when it says: "All things are from One." That One presents itself under various aspects. The three primary aspects are: Mercury, corresponding to the first Sephirah, Kether, the Root of Air, and representing the knowledge aspect of the Life-power; Sulphur, corresponding to Chokmah, the Root of Fire, and representing the activity aspect of the Life-power; Salt, corresponding to Binah, the Root of Water, and representing the substance aspect of the One Reality. These three correspond to the omniscience (Mercury), omnipotence (Sulphur), and omnipresence (Salt) of the Universal Spirit.

Thus our quotation from TURBA PHILOSOPHORUM says the alchemical water owes its permanence to the fact that it is united to its Sulphur. The Sulphur is Chokmah, the Root of Fire, called by Qabalists אב, Ab, the Father.

Chokmah is the active life-force, and without this inherent force, the substance aspect of the Life-power would have no permanence. The alchemical water is the vehicle of the alchemical fire. The fire is hidden within it. Hence it is written that philosophers "burn with water."

One of our quotations calls it a "tortured water, that hath suffered some alteration obvious to all, but known to few." This is symbolized by the twelfth Key of Tarot, where the central figure is obviously undergoing a kind of torture. The nature of the torture is suspension by a rope composed of twisted strands. Thus the symbolism of this Key is actually a pictorial representation of the ideas embodied in the explanation of this passage, in Lesson 22, page 2.

The permanence of alchemical water is also hinted at by the fact that to the letter Mem is attributed the Stable Intelligence, said to be "the source of consistency among all the Sephiroth." Stability is immutability, soundness, vitality, coherence, solidity. These qualities are directly associated with the ideas of permanence and substance represented by alchemical water.

Furthermore, the Hanged Man represents the idea of suspension, the state of a solid when its particles are mixed with, but undissolved by, a fluid. Thus alchemists tell us that their water holds all things, like seeds in a bag. Hence, in some versions of the Hanged Man, a bag is tied behind the arms of the suspended figure, and from this bag coins are falling. These coins are to be understood as symbolizing what TURBA



PHILOSOPHORUM mentions when it says:

"Unless you turn the aforesaid copper into white, and make visible coins, and then afterwards turn it again into redness, until a Tincture results, verily, ye accomplish nothing." (TURBA PHILOSOPHORUM, translated by A. E. Waite, page 28.)

The copper is Venus, or First Matter. It is turned into whiteness or silver, out of which are made the "coins." These are then changed to redness, in order to make the Tincture.

The Venus, or copper, is the power of desire, formless at first. This is then transformed into "visible coins," which are mental images. They are said to be made of silver, the alchemical metal corresponding to the Moon, because the Moon (as the Tarot Key of the High Priestess shows) is associated with the subconscious store of memorized impressions. Every definite mental image, whatever it may be, is built up from materials drawn from this store. Thus the indefinite urge of desire, represented by Venus, must be transformed first into the visible coins of mental imagery. These are then changed into redness.

Red is the color associated with the planet Mars. Hence redness refers to action. Until the coins of imagination are transformed into corresponding action, realization of our desires cannot be brought about. This is where many students and teachers of applied psychology, New Thought and mental science fall into grave error. Definite mental images are indispensable for success in practical occultism, but the work is by no means completed when they have been formed.

They are necessary because without them there can be no right direction of action, nor can we have the advantage of the influence they exercise on subconsciousness, particularly in putting us in touch telepathically with persons who can aid us in realizing our aims. It is a foolish mistake, however, to expect our mental images to materialize themselves. We must act in accordance with them. This is the alchemical process of turning the visible silver coins into redness.



# THE GREAT WORK

## THE ELEMENT OF WATER (4)

### Lesson Twenty-four

Alchemical water, like ordinary water, has the power of dissolving substances, as well as the power of holding them in suspension. Solution is the act or process whereby a substance is absorbed into and homogeneously mixed with a liquid. This is the meaning of the alchemical term dissolution, closely related also to that use of the word dissolution which signifies death. This aspect of alchemical water is represented by the thirteenth Tarot Key.

This Key corresponds to the letter Nun, and the root-idea of that letter is "to be full of seeds." This, of course, is in close correspondence to the alchemical doctrine that the element of water is the "sperm of the world." Again, as an adjective, the word Nun means "permanent," or "perpetual," and this connects with the alchemical teaching that the element of water is a permanent fluid.

Dissolution is declared to be the great secret of the alchemical operation, and Key 13 of Tarot is a symbol of this arcanum. It is connected with the zodiacal sign Scorpio, a fixed sign of the watery quality, named עקרב, okareb, in Hebrew. The number of this word is 372, and it is the number of כבשים, kebeshim, "young lambs;" of עשב, esayb, "green herbs," or "tender plants;" and of שבע, which has various vowel-points and meanings, including: 1. to be full, filled, satisfied; 2. plenty, abundance; 3. to swear, to bind with an oath; 4. the numeral, seven.

"Young lambs" is a direct reference to the fiery quality hidden in alchemical water, for a male lamb is an immature ram, and is therefore a symbol of the alchemical fire connected with Aries, the Ram. Note, also, that both Aries and Scorpio are ruled by Mars, a fiery planet.

"Green herbage" refers to the embodiment of life in physical forms, and because of the profusion of seed in such herbage, is connected with the reproductive force represented by Scorpio, and with the symbol of a seed in the upper corner of Key 13. In Hebrew symbolism, human life is also represented by the word עשב, esayb, as in the phrase: "They of the city shall flourish like grass (esayb) of the earth." (Psalm 72:16) Thus, in Key 13, the skeleton reaper mows human hands, feet and heads. Furthermore, the seed-symbol in this Key is in the corner of the picture corresponding to that in which is placed the symbol of the sign Aquarius (a man's head) in Keys 10 and 21. The intimation here is that alchemical water, the "sperm of the world," is the substance which, as Eliphas Levi says, man seems to multiply in the reproduction of his species.

שבע, as meaning "to be filled, to be satisfied," reminds us that this substance contains all we can desire for the satisfaction of every need. As meaning "to swear, to bind with an oath," the same word hints that our use of this power entails certain definite obligations. Thus Eliphas Levi says of the Hanged Man, who represents another phase of the same alchemical water: "He is an adept, bound by his engagements," In every occult school, the aspirant must take some sort of obligation. Thus the answer to the Masonic interrogation, "What makes you a Mason?" is, "My obligation."



Finally, **זנע**, as the name of the number 7, indicates a point definitely connected with alchemical water, since the latter is said to be the seed of the metals, which, alchemically, are seven in number.

In THE SECRET SYMBOLS OF THE ROSICRUCIANS, a plate on page 57 of the German edition shows a sort of globe, composed of rising arrows. It is plainly labelled Wasser (Water), and has four other designations, which mean "Celestial Seeds," "Animal Seeds," "Vegetable Seeds," and "Mineral Seeds." Scattered through this part of the diagram are the symbols of the Sun, Moon and planets, together with the symbols of Sulphur, Mercury, and Salt, symbols of the four elements, and other alchemical emblems. The meaning is the same as that we have just touched on at the end of the preceding paragraph.

In Tarot, the number 7 is connected also with the element of water, because 7 is the number of the Key named The Chariot, which corresponds to the watery sign Cancer. The idea of fluidity is connected also with the seventh Key, since that Key represents the Qabalistic path named "Intelligence of the House of Influence." This path begins in the third Sephirah, the Great Sea, Binah, which is also the Root of Water among the Three Supernals.

The letter corresponding to Cancer is Cheth, meaning "an enclosed field." Note that the idea of enclosure harks back to that of limitation, associated with Saturn.

The enclosed field is what Hindu philosophy calls Kshetra, the name given in THE BHAGAVAD-GITA to "this body" (BHAGAVAD-GITA, chap. 13). Kshetra means literally "the perishable," and the thirteenth chapter of the GITA is an exposition of the relation between the Kshetra and the Kshetrajna. In Key 7, the rider in the car is the Kshetrajna, and the chariot (together with its environment) symbolizes the Kshetra. All objects whatever are included in the Kshetra, which is the same as Prakriti, the mysterious power of the finitizing principle.

In Hebrew, Cancer is **סרטן**, saritawn, and the number of this word is 319, also the number of **זש**, yawshat, "to stretch out, to extend." Here is an intimation that the aspect of water corresponding to Cheth and the sign Cancer is that of expansion or extension. The fundamental idea is that the alchemical water is that which forms itself into all manner of objects. It is the principle, furthermore, of increase and growth.

In physics, the term extension is defined as "that property of a body whereby it occupies a portion of space." This connects directly with the astrological meanings of the sign Cancer, which is the sign related to the fourth house of the horoscope, having to do with real estate, landed property, home, and the like. In horary astrology, moreover, this sign and its natural house represent the "end of the matter," or the completion of a cycle of manifestation, which completion has to do with the notion of perfection, increase and development. These are ideas related to the fundamental meanings of the number 7.

One other Hebrew letter corresponds to the element of water, the letter Qoph. Its name means "back of the head." Here is a subtlety often overlooked. The "Head" is a Qabalistic technical term, meaning the number 1, the first Sephirah, Kether, the Crown.



Kether is that aspect of the Life-power having to do with the beginning of manifestation. Qoph, the "back of the head," stands for that which is behind this beginning. Here we understand behind as meaning "prior to," and also as signifying "underlying motivation." In our common speech we refer to our hidden motives when we say of a person whose intentions are not quite clear to us: "I wish I knew what is in the back of his head."

The Qabalah gives us a clue to the hidden motivation of the cosmic process of manifestation when it assigns to the letter Qoph the mode of consciousness named Corporeal Intelligence. Concerning this the text of Qabalah entitled THE THIRTY-TWO PATHS OF WISDOM says:

"The twenty-ninth path is called the Corporeal Intelligence because it marks out the forms of all bodies which are incorporated under every revolution of the zodiac, and is what constitutes the arrangement and the disposition thereof."

That is, the hidden motive behind manifestation is the universal urge of the Life-power to provide vehicles suitable for the expression of its inner potencies. This is accomplished by the formation and reproduction of physical bodies. The Hermetic doctrine is similar. It says the power of the One Force is integrating, "if it be turned into earth."

That this power of integration is associated with water may be seen in the Tarot Key corresponding to Qoph, Key 18, the Moon. There the Corporeal Intelligence is symbolized as a path, beginning in a pool of water, and ending on the same snowy height which is occupied by the Hermit of Key 9. The snow and ice of the Hermit's environment are crystallized, or solidified, water. Thus the path of Key 18 begins in fluid, and ends in solid, water. It therefore represents what alchemists call "the fixation of the volatile."

The letter Qoph corresponds to the watery sign Pisces. In the old astrology this sign was ruled by Jupiter (Jupiter Pluvius, Lord of rain), and in modern astrology Neptune, king of the sea, is said to rule it also.

In this same sign, Venus is said to be exalted, and we have already traced the connection between Venus and the sea. Furthermore, Venus is one name for the First Matter, so that the exaltation of Venus in Pisces is an intimation that in the alchemical process corresponding to this sign the First Matter reaches its highest stage of development.

On this account, the astrological symbol for Pisces is used by alchemists to represent the twelfth stage of the Great Work, called Projection. In Ripley's COMPOUND OF ALCHYMIE, it is made clear that projection has to do with bodies and with growth. Thus Ripley counsels his readers, in his TWELFTH GATE, to keep on increasing the power of the Universal Medicine. He says:

"See that thou fulfil the commandments of God. Keep thy glass in the fire, and multiply thy Medicines ever more and more, for wise men say, 'In plenty there is no sorrow.'" More than this, in describing the work of projection he declares: "He knows not what Projection really means who fails to join the Elixirs with bodies properly cleansed."



He who understands what is really accomplished by alchemy, or by its Oriental equivalent, yoga, realizes that the Great Work is the perfection of the human vehicle by the sacrifice of all which prevents it from being a completely transparent medium for the expression of the potencies of the Life-power.

Summing up all this, we may understand that alchemical fire and alchemical water are not two things, but one, manifesting itself in opposite directions. Alchemical fire is the activity, or Sulphur, aspect of the One Reality. Alchemical water is the substance, or Salt, aspect of the same One Thing.

The triangle representing fire points upward. That which symbolizes water points downward, to indicate the integrating, form-producing work whereby the One Reality provides itself with suitable vehicles for its self-expression.

Alchemical water is that aspect of the One Thing which, as THE EMERALD TABLET says, "receives the power of the superiors and of the inferiors." It is the aspect of the Life-power over which the Spirit broods to bring forth forms.

For us, it is the substance of our bones, of our flesh, of our blood. It is the subtle fluid, the electro-magnetism of modern physics, and its most important manifestations are in our veins, our arteries, our nerves and our lymphatic ducts. Its currents through our nerves are shaped and formed by our mental imagery. So modified, these currents affect the vital secretions, and so change the chemistry of blood and lymph.

Mrs. Atwood says: "Alchemy is the universal art of vital chemistry, which by fermenting the human spirit, purifies, and, finally dissolving it, opens the elementary germ into new life and consciousness; and the Philosophers' Stone is the efflux of such a life, drawn to a focus and made manifest as a concrete Essence of Light, which Essence is the true Form or Idea of Gold. The process takes place in and through the human body in the blood, changing the relation of its component parts and principles."

The same idea is told in the Rosicrucian allegory, FAMA FRATERNITATIS. There we read that Brother C.R. was initiated in the "Temple of Dam-Car," or "Temple of the Blood of the Lamb," after he had spent some time in Damascus because of the infirmity of his body. Damascus means "work," and Brother C.R.'s sojourn there has to do with the work of purification made necessary by physical imperfections which are overcome in the course of what alchemy designates as the "gross work." This must be completed before the "subtle work" which deals with finer forces may be undertaken with any degree of safety.

It is because occult students are so often improperly or insufficiently instructed as to the necessity for the "gross work" that so many cranks are to be found among them. They attempt the subtle work while their bodies are impure and weak. The inevitable consequence, even of such supposedly safe practices as meditation, and other exercises in Raja Yoga, is a distribution of poisons throughout the physical body. These poisons affect the brain, the nerves and the ductless glands. They are often responsible for serious alterations of personal character, ranging all the way from silly eccentricity through various phases of emotional instability, to profound neuroses, and even insanity.



No error is more common than the notion that it is safe to undertake mental practice without preliminary physical preparation. We find this error in the writings of many teachers who ought to know better. Raja Yoga practice, meditation, visualization, and other forms of mental practice are just as certainly bodily activities as are walking or gymnastic exercises. They involve the subtle currents of alchemical water in the brain and nervous system.

Nothing is more dangerous, if begun before the organism is purified. Of all the insidious efforts of what occultism calls the "dark forces," none is more deadly than the well-meant attempts of many otherwise admirable persons to persuade their pupils to concentrate, meditate, visualize, and so on, without paying any attention to the preliminary "gross work." Some even go so far as to assert that the gross work was accomplished during our earlier incarnations, so that we do not need it now.

Tarot gives pertinent hints to the contrary. Key 12, symbolizing alchemical water itself, emphasizes our personal dependence on the cosmic tree of existence, our utter subjection to the physical laws determining personality. Key 13 has to do with the functions of the reproductive and genito-urinary organs. Key 7 relates to the stomach and to the muscles of the chest which are employed in breathing. Key 18 is connected with the total consciousness of the cells composing the body. Thus all the emphasis of the Tarot Keys representing the element of water falls on the physical embodiment of the Life-power in our organisms, on the need for right selection of food and control of breathing, on the need for controlling and sublimating the forces at work in the genito-urinary organs, and, finally, on the need for clear recognition of the truth that the path leading into the region of a higher consciousness is a path of physiological transformation.

Alchemical water, then, is the cosmic fire, specialized in the nerve currents and chemistry of the blood stream. The purification of this water must be the first work of the alchemist. He must choose true foods, and regulate his habits of eating. He must control his sex-life, and see that kidney elimination is what it should be. He must learn, little by little, to rebuild his body, sacrificing everything which clouds or obscures its transparency to the light of the Life-power. And, finally, he must impose a pattern of the New Image on its cells through the agency of his subconsciousness.

In our next group of lessons we shall discuss the alchemical meaning of the element of air.



# THE GREAT WORK

## THE ELEMENT OF AIR (1)

### Lesson Twenty-Five

It is a commonplace of occult doctrine that air, breath, life and spirit are all closely associated. This point has been mentioned again and again in our lessons on Tarot and Qabalah, and needs little elaboration here.

On the Tree of Life, Kether, the Crown, highest of the Three Supernals, is called the Root of Air, and this element is assigned also to Tiphareth, Beauty, and to Yesod, Foundation. This shows that Qabalists understand this element as proceeding from the Primal Will which is also the seat of the Universal Self, יחידה, Yekhidah. They think also of the element of air as being active in Tiphareth, the seat of the personal Ego, which is held by them to be a reflection of the Universal Self in Kether. Finally, the connection between Yesod and the element of air is shown by the fact that to Yesod is attributed נפש, Nephesh, the Vital Soul. For the primary meaning of the word Nephesh is "breath." The level of consciousness corresponding to Yesod is what Qabalists call "automatic consciousness," because it reacts automatically to the various impulses received by it. It is the same as the subconsciousness of the psychologists.

It is evident, therefore, that in Qabalah it is taught that the power of the element of air extends from the heights of Absolute Being to subconscious depths where its activity is manifested in the impulses of the mysterious urge named libido by analytical psychology. That the Nephesh Chaiah, or Breath of Life, at work in Yesod is identical with the libido is made evident by comparing what Qabalists say about Nephesh with what psychologists report concerning the libido.

There is a close correspondence, also, between what alchemists say of the element of air and what yoga philosophers have written about Prana. In NATURE'S FINER FORCES, Rama Prasad gives the following definition of Prana:

"Prana, the life principle of the universe and its localized manifestation; the life principle of man and other living beings. The suns are different centers of the ocean of Prana. Our solar system is filled to its extremest limit with Prana, and it is in this ocean that move the various heavenly bodies. It is held that the whole ocean of Prana, with the sun and moon and other planets, is a complete picture of every living organism on earth, or, for that matter, of any planet. Hence is Prana spoken of sometimes as a person, or living being. All the manifestations of life in the body are known as minor Pranas. The pulmonary manifestation is known as Prana by pre-eminence."

In Tarot, the Fool represents the personification of the Life-Breath mentioned in the foregoing quotation. His wallet contains the seeds of all possible forms of manifestation. He himself is the archetype of all existence, and the expectancy portrayed in his face is an intimation of conscious foreknowledge of all states and conditions of manifestation to come. Such foreknowledge is inherent in the cosmic Life-Breath.

In RAJA YOGA, Swami Vivekananda writes: "Out of this Prana is evolved everything that we call energy, everything that we call force. It is the Prana that is manifesting as motion; it is the Prana that is manifesting as gravitation, as magnetism. It is the Prana



that is manifesting as the actions of the body, as the nerve currents, as thought force. From thought, down to the lowest physical state, everything is but the manifestation of Prana. The sum-total of all force in the universe, when resolved back into its original state, is called Prana. He who has grasped Prana has grasped all the forces of the universe, mental and physical. He who has controlled the Prana has controlled his body, and all the bodies that exist, because the Prana is the generalized manifestation of force. How to control the Prana is the one idea. Each man must begin where he stands, must learn how to control the things that are nearest to him. This body is the nearest thing to us, nearer than anything in the universe, and this mind is the nearest of all. The Prana which is working this mind and body is the nearest to us of all the Prana in the universe. This little wave of Prana which represents our own energies, mental and physical, is the nearest wave to us of all that infinite ocean of Prana, and if we can succeed in controlling that little wave, then alone can we hope to control the whole of Prana. Perfection is to be gained by the Yogi who has done this, and no power is any more his master."

There are many points of correspondence between this Hindu doctrine and the alchemical descriptions of the element of air. For example, compare Vivekananda's teaching with what Paracelsus writes in ON THE GENERATIONS OF THE ELEMENTS:

"The element of air was appointed for no other purpose than to be the abode of the other three, each to be conserved, as it were, within its own close in the following way. The air encloses in itself every mortal thing, and shuts it off from what is immortal, as a wall divides a city from the fields. It strengthens the world, and keeps it together, as a dam does a marsh. And just as there is nothing in an egg to one who looks at it from without, or outside the egg, which agrees with what is inside, so the sky is a shell dividing heaven and earth, just as the egg-shell separates the egg from what is outside it. The air, again, is like a skin in which is stored up a body, the whole world, to wit, and wherein the earth is contained and preserved. The air, then, is this sky, a skin, or egg-shell, or wall, or mound, beyond which nothing can burst through, and within which nothing can break in. Moreover, the air is breath, from which all draw their life. This is truly air itself, and puts forth the air which nourishes the four elements, and at the same time sustains the life of man. Without it none could live."

Paracelsus was ever a confused and confusing writer, but the gist of his meaning is clear. When he compares the element of air to an egg-shell, or to a wall, enclosing the whole world, he conveys the same idea Vivekananda expresses by saying: "Out of this Prana is evolved everything that we call energy, everything that we call force." What is more, Paracelsus recognizes the existence of a subtle "air" which, he tells us, "nourishes the four elements." This subtle air is the Life-Breath which Hindus call Prana, and which in Hebrew is named Ruach.

Of this subtle air Thomas Vaughan writes, in ANTHROPOSOPHIA THEOMAGICA:

"The thing to be now spoken of is Air. This is no element, but a certain miraculous Hermaphrodite, the cement of two worlds, and a medley of extremes. It is Nature's commonplace, her index, where you may find all that she ever did, or intends to do. This is the world's panegyric, the excursions of both globes meet here, and I may call



it the rendezvous. In this are innumerable magical forms of men and beasts, fish and fowls, trees, herbs, and all creeping things. This is the 'sea of things invisible,' for all the conceptions 'in the bosom of the superior nature' wrap themselves in this tiffany before they embark in the shell. It retains the species of all things whatsoever, and is the immediate receptacle of spirits after dissolution, whence they pass to a Superior Limbus. I should amaze the reader if I did relate the various offices of this body, but it is the magician's back door, and none but friends come in at it. I shall speak nothing more--only this I would have you know: the Air is the 'envelope of the life of our sensitive spirit,' our animal oil, the fuel of the vital, sensual fire, without which we cannot subsist a minute." He writes also, in LUMEN DE LUMINE: "Air also is a fleeting, indeterminate substance, but water is his vessel; for water being figured by means of earth, the air also is thickened and figured in the water."

Compare the foregoing with Rama Prasad's declaration that Prana is a complete picture of every organism on earth, or on any other planet. See how perfectly it agrees with his statement that all manifestations of life in the body are aspects of Prana.

Note also that Vaughan says the Air is a "medley of extremes." What he describes is what modern physicists call the Ether of Space, to which they ascribe qualities which are contradictory, as when they say it is at once the thinnest and the densest of all things, or that it is the most rigid and at the same time the most elastic.

In THE BOOK OF FORMATION are two nouns which may be translated as "air." One is Ruach, the Life-Breath. This is the primitive or original air, not an element, as Vaughan correctly affirms. The other is אוֹר, ever, which signifies: 1. air; 2. space, vacuum. This is the atmospheric air concerning which THE BOOK OF FORMATION says: "The wind (atmospheric air) from elementary air, or Spirit," אוֹר מְרוּחַ, ever meruach.

Ever, the atmospheric air or wind, is the same as the Vayu of the Hindus. In the yoga classification of the elements, Vayu means literally "the vibrating." To it is attributed the property of locomotion, or movement from place to place. Vayu is also the subtle principle manifest in the sense of touch. Concerning it THE SCIENCE OF BREATH says: "Meditate upon the Vayu as being spherical, sky-blue, and giving the power of going into space, and flying like birds."

The spherical form of the Vayu Tattva is that of the atmosphere surrounding the earth. In this connection, bear in mind what is said by Eliphas Levi concerning the personal atmosphere--that it is formed by the projection of the Astral Light. On the Hermetic principle of correspondence between the microcosm and the macrocosm, we may understand that the Vayu Tattva, as the earth's atmosphere, is a projection of the currents of the Astral Light from the earth's body.

Vayu is the subtle principle of touch, not of smell, as might at first be supposed. For touch is the primary sense from which sight, taste and smell are developed. Even hearing is closely allied to touch, as we know from the reactions of the deaf to sound. The higher sense organs are specialized from nerve centers which respond to tactile sensations. Atmospheric sensations, such as heat and cold, the pressure of the wind,



or the sensations which modify the temperature of air in their vicinity, are the roots of the higher senses. We have eyes because our animal ancestors felt the effect of sunlight on their skins.

The property of the Vayu Tattva is locomotion. Rama Prasad says:

"Vayu is a form of motion itself, for motion in all directions is motion in a circle, large or small. The Vayu Tattva has itself the form of spherical motion. When to the motion which keeps up the form of the different ethers is added the stereotyped motion of the Vayu, locomotion is the result."

---NATURE'S FINER FORCES, p. 9.

The Vishnu Purana says: "Sound is the characteristic of the Akasha (Ether, Spirit, or Ruach): it generates Air, the property of which is Touch; which becomes productive of Color and Light." This is essentially the same doctrine as that of THE BOOK OF FORMATION, which says that ever, air, emanates from Ruach, Spirit. Note also that the circular form of Vayu, enclosing the earth, is akin to what Paracelsus has in mind when he says: "The air encloses in itself every mortal thing."

Mine is the healing influence  
 Flowing down from consecrated hands,  
 Mine the venom of the adder's fang.  
     Nothing falleth but by me  
 And in whatsoever riseth  
 Mine is the power that lifteth up.

(From THE BOOK OF TOKENS by Dr. Paul Foster Case.)



THE GREAT WORK  
THE ELEMENT OF AIR (2)

Lesson Twenty-Six

The numeral value of אור, Eveer, is 217. This is also the number of אורי, the proper name Uri, meaning "fiery, lustrous." It is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek word photinos, "lustrous, bright," derived from phos, light. In the second chapter of 1 Chronicles, we read that Uri was the son of Hur, who was the son of Caleb by Ephrath.

Now, Hur, or Khor, is really the same as the name of the Egyptian sun-god, child of Osiris and Isis. Ephrath is a feminine proper name signifying "fruitfulness," which is also given to the place which, elsewhere in the Bible, is called Bethlehem, "house of bread." Caleb means "dog." Thus Caleb symbolizes the self-conscious mental activity pictured in Tarot by the dog in Key 0, and by the rising Hermanubis in Key 10.

Ephrath, as the wife of Caleb, is another of the many designations for subconscious mental activity. This, when it is energized by self-consciousness, produces the personal Ego typified in Egypt by Khor or Horus. Thus Hur, the father of Uri, belongs to Tiphareth, the sixth Sephirah, because Tiphareth is the "pigeon-hole" in the Qabalistic filing cabinet to which we assign all solar deities.

To Tiphareth are related the Rosicrucian rites which rehearse the symbolism of the Vault our Brother and Father, C. R., constructed for his sepulchre. C.R., or Ch R, is a transliteration of the Hebrew for Khor or Hur.

The root-meaning of this Hebrew noun is "to be white," hence, figuratively, "to be shining, noble." In alchemy, because of its connection with the sun, it is associated with the metal gold, which is exceptionally lustrous, and is called also the most noble metal.

Everywhere in the world the color white, whatever be its variations of meaning, is taken to be a symbol of goodness, just as black is taken to be a symbol for evil. Thus it is worth noting that white is the color which most perfectly radiates light, just as black is the color which absorbs light. White gives, but black takes. White multiplies and projects the power of light. Black negates and absorbs that power. White is open and free, the very meaning of the word "candid." Black is just the opposite.

Hur, according to the Bible, is the father of Uri, or "brightness," and Uri, in turn, is the father of Bezaleel (בצלאל: 153), the skilled workman who made the greater part of the fittings of the Mosaic tabernacle. The first letter of his name is Beth, corresponding to the planet Mercury, and to the Magician in Tarot. The other letters of his name are all connected with the element of air. Tzaddi represents the airy sign Aquarius. Lamed is the letter of the airy sign Libra. Aleph is the letter corresponding to the Life-Breath, Ruach.

The ZOHAR says the name Bezaleel should be understood as meaning betzel El, "in the very shadow of God," and goes on to declare that he who is so described is "The Righteous, who sits in the shadow of Him whose name is 'The Highest God' (El elyon)."



All this complicated Qabalism in the name of the artificer of the tabernacle has a direct bearing on our consideration of the element of air. For the tabernacle, like the temple, was understood by Qabalists to correspond to the structure of heaven and earth. It was a symbol of the universe, or macrocosm, and it was also a symbol of man, the microcosm.

Caleb, the grandfather of Bezaleel, represents, as we have said, the self-conscious level of the Life-power's activity. The action of this upon subconsciousness (Ephrath) focusses the universal Life-Breath in a particular time and place as the Ego (Hur) of a human personality. On the Tree of Life, this Ego is assigned to the sixth Sephirah, Tiphareth, to which the element of air is also attributed.

The Ego is the "father" or source of the Animal Soul Nephesh Chaiah (נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה): 453) posited in Yesod, the ninth Sephirah. Nephesh Chaiah means "breath of life," and is the Hebrew of the phrase so translated in Genesis 2:7. The Sephirah Yesod is said also to be related to the element of air, and the breath of life, Nephesh Chaiah, is the vital principle common to plants, animals and man.

This particular aspect of the Life-Breath is what is designated in Sanskrit by the noun Vayu, "the vibrating," and in Hebrew by אַוִּיר, Ever. By the common Qabalistic device of metathesis, אַוִּיר is changed into אִוִּיר, Uri, whose son, Bezaleel, the cunning artificer who built the tabernacle, is that same Life-Breath manifested in Malkuth, the tenth Sephirah, where it is the body-building power following and executing patterns received from above.

The Bible says Bezaleel was filled with the Spirit of God, Ruach Elohim, in wisdom, Chokmah, and in understanding, Tebunah, the form of Binah designated by Qabalists as the "Special Intelligence," and in knowledge, Da'ath, and in all manner of workmanship, Melakah.

Fine workmanship depends on the sense of touch, which is related to the element of air, considered as Vayu or Ever. Furthermore, fine workmanship requires dexterity, directly ruled by the planet Mercury. Here recall the alchemical dictum that the Great Work, performed by the aid of Mercury, is actually a manual operation.

In short, Bezaleel typifies the alchemical operation, and this operation is the building of the tabernacle of the regenerated personality. This is accomplished by control of that aspect of the element of air which is indicated by the word אַוִּיר, Ever.

Confirmation of this is given by a statement in the TALMUD, which says: "Rab Jehudah stated in the name of Rab that Bezaleel understood the combinations of letters by which heaven and earth were created." The commentator Rashi adds, "as it is taught in THE SEPHER YETZIRAH." Thus even the TALMUD preserves the Hebrew tradition that the name Bezaleel has to do with the power of controlling the vibration of atmospheric air through sounds and words.

The ability to effect such control is what is developed by the practice Hindus call Pranayama. Development of this power is also the object of Mantra Yoga, or the use of sound vibration in the chanting of divine names and sentences.



Ignorant misunderstanding of what is taught in THE SEPHER YETZIRAH, and in other Qabalistic books, has led to the mistaken supposition that there is magical virtue in written combinations of words and letters. From this error much nonsense has been developed. Written formulas are powerless unless they be correctly pronounced, so as to set up actual atmospheric vibration.

The written words are to magical control just what the written notes are to music. There is no music in the notes, nor is there any magic in words and letters. Yet the notes may become music by means of the singing or playing of a musician, and the Qabalistic letters and words are transformed into powerful vibrations when intoned by a true adept.

That the element of air is the basis of actual physical form is intimated also by THE SEPHER YETZIRAH in a passage directly related to the Talmudic tradition about the artificer, Bezaleel. In Chapter 2, Section 6, we read:

"He created from the formless, and made the non-existent exist; and He formed large columns out of intangible air. This is the token: He beheld, exchanged, and brought forth the whole creation, and all objects (by means of) one combination of letters, the token of which is the twenty-two elementary substances derived from the substance of Aleph."

The noun translated "air" in the foregoing is **אֵי**, Eveer. The primitive substance of Aleph is Ruach, or Prana. The twenty-two elementary substances are the twenty-two aspects of energy associated with the twenty-two letters. In one sense, these are all modes of planetary force, since the three Mothers, Aleph, Mem and Shin, correspond respectively to Uranus, Neptune and Pluto, while the seven double letters represent the planets known to the ancients, together with the sun and moon; and the twelve simple letters represent the specializations of planetary force through the signs of the zodiac.

In alchemy and magic, as in yoga, the power to control atmospheric vibration is the key to all other powers. Not for nothing is magic termed "enchantment," that is, singing. The book of Daniel mentions a special class of wise men, the ashapim, **אֲשָׁפִים**, whose work was directly connected with the formulation of musical sequences based on astrological calculation.

In the CONFESSIO of the Rosicrucians we read: "Were it not sufficient so to sing and play that instead of stony rocks you could draw pearls, instead of wild beasts' spirits, and instead of Pluto you could soften the mighty princes of the world?" Here is a clear intimation that Rosicrucian practical knowledge includes both vocal and instrumental use of sound-vibration to control various forces and forms of the mineral kingdom. "To soften the mighty princes of the world" means to moderate or temper the great powers which are manifest in the universe. Cosmic principles, rather than ruling monarchs are here to be understood.

One most curious phrase occurs in Vaughan's description of the element of air. He calls it "the magician's back door," and assures us that none but friends come in by it.



By this he points us to the idea that the element of air is the means whereby the universal forces behind external manifestation enter the personal life of a magician. "The back door" opens on the invisible realm of causes which are manifested in the visible, outer phenomena which we perceive through the front doors and windows of sensation. None but friends enter through this back door, because he who has learned to open this door finds that all the forces of nature are friendly to him who understands them. The element of air is this door, since all techniques for gaining knowledge of the invisible reality depend upon control of this element, especially in breathing.

He who learns how to control his breathing, and how to utilize sound-vibration, opens a door in the back of his mind through which the powers of superconsciousness enter into the field of personal experience. Part of the process whereby this is accomplished is hinted by the second letter of the name Bezaleel. It is the letter Tzaddi, represented by Key 17 of Tarot, and associated with meditation.

He who would meditate must control his breathing. The process of meditation is akin to the alchemical process of dissolution, designated in alchemy by the same symbol that astrologers know as the glyph for the zodiacal sign Aquarius. The symbol consists of two wavy lines, one over the other. The form of the lines suggests vibration. Their position in relation to each other reminds us of the Hermetic axiom: "That which is below is as that which is above, and that which is above is as that which is below."

The natural, or psychical, man, whose emotions and thoughts change direction continually in response to sensory and telepathic impulses, always breathes irregularly. The man who meditates begins by controlling his breath. The simple act of watching the breath is usually sufficient to make it regular, and the regularity thus established is certain to be in harmony with cosmic rhythms, because cosmic rhythms are actually the natural rhythms for human physiological function. Thus in Qabalah, meditation is connected with the mode of consciousness which is named Natural Intelligence.

At the beginning of this kind of training, it is unwise to attempt any forced rhythm. Experts can, and do, employ special rhythms of breath control for special purposes. But one must be able to walk before he learns to dance, and simple regularity, established by little more than watchfulness as the breath flows in and out the nostrils, suffices to establish a natural rhythm.

Every alchemist insists on the importance of going to Nature direct and learning from her. The Great Work is founded on natural principles. It seeks to overcome the unnatural conditions of disease, poverty, bondage and unhappiness. Hence the SEPHER YETZIRAH says the purpose of meditation is to "restore the Creator to His throne."

Right meditation, again, is associated with alchemical dissolution because it dissolves delusions which limit our true freedom. It dissolves the sense of separate personality. It dissolves the delusion that we are beset by enemies on every hand. It dissolves errors which have accumulated in subconsciousness, tears away the veil of ignorance which conceals the beautiful truth. It leads to the completion of the Great Work, and we should remember that this completion is sometimes called the Universal Medicine. A medicine restores. It cures a diseased condition. It is a means for bringing



us back to health, that is, to wholeness. We are sick because our personal consciousness has been split off from the One Life. One of the objects of alchemy is to restore our conscious, vital connection with the One.

As a consequence of right meditation, physical and mental poise are established. This result is connected with the occult meaning of the third letter of Bezaleel, the letter Lamed, corresponding to the airy sign Libra, and to the function of work, or action. The Great Work has much to do with the establishment of chemical equilibrium in the blood.

Qabalists, by ascribing work to Lamed, make this letter a symbol for what Hindus term Karma, which also means "work or action." One of the objects of right meditation is described by yogis as "frying the seeds of Karma." These seeds are termed Samskaras, impressions of past activities. When meditation is perfected, the Samskaras are overcome. Thus Swami Vivekananda says:

"You remember that our goal is to perceive the Soul itself. We cannot perceive the Soul because it has got mingled up with nature, with the mind, with the body. The ignorant man thinks his body is the Soul. The learned man thinks his mind is the Soul, but both of them are mistaken. What makes the Soul get mingled up with all this? Different waves in the Chitta (the mind-stuff) rise and cover the Soul; we only see a little reflection of the Soul through these waves, so, if the wave is one of anger, we see the Soul as angry: 'I am angry,' one says. If it is one of love we see ourselves reflected in that wave, and say we are loving. If that wave is one of weakness, and the Soul is reflected in it, we think we are weak. These various ideas come from these impressions, these Samskaras covering the Soul. The real nature of the Soul is not perceived as long as there is a single wave in the lake of the Chitta; this real nature will never be perceived until all the waves have subsided; so, first Patanjali teaches us the meaning of these waves; secondly, the best way to repress them; and thirdly, how to make one wave so strong as to suppress all other waves, fire eating fire, as it were. When only one remains it will be easy to suppress that also, and when that is gone, Samadhi or concentration is called seedless. It leaves nothing, and the Soul is manifested just as It is, in Its own glory. Then alone we know that the Soul is not a compound, It is the only eternal 'simple' in the universe, and as such, It cannot be born, It cannot die. It is immortal, indestructible, the ever-living essence of intelligence."

--RAJA YOGA, Mayavati edition, vol. 1, p.234.



THE GREAT WORK  
THE ELEMENT OF AIR (3)

Lessen Twenty-Seven

The mathematical representation of the "Eternal Simple" is the zero sign 0, which is the number of the Tarot Key named The Fool. (Note that "simple" is one synonym for "foolish," and that a fool is often called a "simpleton.") This Key symbolizes the highest aspect of the element of air--the undifferentiated Spirit, Ruach. In its essence, that Spirit is truly No-Thing, and by Qabalists is therefore named אין, En, Naughtness.

אדון is the number 61, which is also the value of the noun אדון, Adon, "master, lord, possessor." In this Gematria we find the implication that the No-Thing is master and lord of everything. Precisely this is the meaning of the Fool in Tarot. The One Spirit (Ruach) contains and rules everything, for, as Vaughan says, "it retains the species of everything."

Another word corresponding to 61 is אני, Ani, "I, myself." Thus the Gematria intimates that the Ego is essentially identical with the No-Thing.

Yet another correspondence to 61 is בטן, beten, which has the primary significance of "belly, stomach," but means also "womb," and finally, "the inmost." The suggestion is that our sense of being within the physical body is due in large measure to sensations rising from the activities of our viscera. This is perfectly true. It is also true that the same word, beten, refers to our awareness of the Self as being the innermost center of life whence all else emerges.

The Tarot Fool represents this inmost "Simple." This is the pure, undifferentiated Spirit--to our self-conscious awareness appearing as superconsciousness. Readers of these pages who know that the path of Aleph joins Kether to Chokmah on the Tree of Life should not be confused by this present identification of the Fool and Ruach with אין, En. The Tree of Life charts the process of seeming differentiation and subdivision; but in truth the path of Aleph is the very essence of Kether itself, and Kether is naught but the concentration of אין, En, into what Qabalists name נקודה פשוט, nequdah peshut, the Simple Point. A simple point has no dimensions. Neither has the One Reality, which is identical with the One Self, יחידה, Yekhidah, the Indivisible.

This One Self is the goal of the alchemical and magical quest, even though Vivekananda designated it by the less accurate term "Soul." Yet is this One Self the essence of Ruach and hence even the noun אין, En, which signifies "No-Thing," begins with the letter Aleph to which Qabalists attribute Ruach.

For this reason the vesture of the Fool bears the sign of the alchemical Quintessence, an eight-spoked wheel, ten times repeated. It is as much as to say: "The spiritual essences of the ten Sephiroth are part of the vesture or veil of THAT which the Fool really is." And since from other considerations we know that the ten Sephiroth are but veils of the Absolute, there can be no question but that the highest meaning of the Fool is precisely that incomprehensible, ineffable Absolute.

Now, Section 8 of the first chapter of the SEPHER YETZIRAH, literally translated,



runs as follows:

"Ten Sephiroth (from) nothing. One is She, the Breath of the Creative Powers of Lives, praised and blessed be the Name of Him Who lives throughout endless ages. Voice and Spirit and Word, and He, the Holy Spirit."

The word translated "She" in the second sentence is simply the feminine form of the word for "one." The masculine is אֶחָד, echad or achad. The feminine is אֶחָדָה, echath or achath.

Later in the same passage we read, Hua Ruach qodesh, "He the Holy Spirit." In this phrase the word Hua is not only the third person masculine pronoun, but is also a divine name specially attributed to Kether, the Root of Air.

It is as if the Life-Breath, as the Divine Darkness represented by En, the No-Thing, seems to be more feminine than masculine, but when it is concentrated into the Simple Point which is the beginning of the cycle of manifestation represented by the Tree of Life, this Point takes on a semblance of positive masculinity.

Thus the path of Aleph stands for something in which both feminine and masculine potencies are united. You have found references to this in other lessons which have called attention to the fact that the sex of the central figure in Key 0 is not by any means clearly indicated.

Here the main thing to be borne in mind is that everything included in the cycle of manifestation has its roots in the One Breath of the Creative Powers of Lives. The beginning of all activity is what is called Voice in the SEPHER YETZIRAH. This Voice is the same as the Kwan-Yin-Tien mentioned in the sixth STANZA OF DZYAN, concerning which it is written:

"'Kwan-Yin-Tien' means the 'Melodious Heaven of Sound,' the Abode of Kwan-Yin, or the 'Divine Voice.' This 'Voice' is a synonym of the Verbum or Word, 'Speech,' as the expression of Thought. Thus may be traced the connection with, and even the origin of, the Hebrew Bath-Kol, the 'Daughter of the Divine Voice,' or Verbum, or the male and female Logos, the 'Heavenly Man,' or Adam Kadmon, who is at the same time Sephira. The latter was surely anticipated by the Hindu Vach, the goddess of Speech, or of the Word. For Vach--the daughter and the female portion, as is stated, of Brahma, one 'generated by the gods'--is, in company with Kwan-Yin, with Isis (also the daughter, wife and sister of Osiris) and other goddesses, the female Logos, so to speak, the goddess of the active forces in Nature, the Word, Voice or Sound, and Speech. If Kwan-Yin is the 'melodious Voice,' so is Vach the 'melodious cow who milked forth sustenance and water (the female principle) . . . who yields us nourishment and sustenance,' as Mother Nature. She is associated in the work of creation with Prajapati. She is male and female ad libitum, as Eve is with Adam. And she is a form of Aditi--the principle higher than Aether--of Akasha, the synthesis of all the forces in Nature. Thus Vach and Kwan-Yin are both the magic potency of Occult Sound in Nature and Aether--which 'Voice' calls forth Sien-Tchan, the illusive form of the Universe out of Chaos and the Seven Elements."--Blavatsky, THE SECRET DOCTRINE, volume 1, page 161.



As we have said in our lessons on color and sound: "In the order of the Life-power's self-expression, sound precedes light. A very old Sanskrit book tells of Shabda-Brahma, the god of sound, the root-potency of all manifestation. It says, 'Through sound the world stands.' Pythagoras taught the same thing. So did Plato. Both were instructed by Egyptian hierophants. From them they learned that the physical universe is called forth from chaos by ordered, rhythmic sound. Moses, initiated in the same Egyptian schools, began Genesis with an account of a series of creative acts introduced by the words, 'And God said.' The Hebrews and the Greeks alike were instructed in a secret wisdom which had for a central tenet the idea that the laws of musical proportion are expressed in all things. When St. John wrote of the Logos, or the Creative Word, 'Through Him all things were made, and that which hath been made was life in Him' he simply published openly what had long been transmitted from mouth to ear in esoteric schools."

Alchemy, like yoga, its Oriental prototype, is concerned with the conscious direction of the forces of sound-vibration, and this work is really the manipulation of the powers of the gross and subtle forms of the element of air--Eveer or Vayu, and Ruach or Prana.

The manual operation, as alchemists term it, is directly connected with the functions of the lungs, arms and hands, associated with the sign Gemini, represented by Key 6. The outcome of this operation is the equilibration of the powers known as the alchemical Man and Woman. These are symbolized by the two human figures in our version of Key 6. For not only does this Key represent the equilibration of the conscious and subconscious modes of personality, as we have explained in TAROT FUNDAMENTALS and elsewhere; but the Key has also a relation to the balance between the two aspects of Prana, known to yogis as Surya and Rayi, the solar and lunar currents of the serpent power, which is symbolized in Key 6 by the snake coiled round the trunk of the tree behind the woman.

Taken as a symbol of this equilibration, the man in this picture represents the solar current, and the woman the lunar current. The two currents are implied also in the letters of the word וַיְרַח, Ruach. Resh (ר) represents the sun, Vav (ו) can be read as the conjunction "and," and Cheth (ח), through its correspondence with the sign Cancer, stands for the lunar influence concentrated in that sign. Alchemically, then, we may read וַיְרַח as "sun and moon." This reminds us that the Great Work is said to be "the operation of the Sun and Moon, performed by the aid of Mercury."

The planet Mercury is symbolized by the angel in Key 6. He is Raphael, whose name means "God is the healer." Raphael is also the archangel of the element of air. Thus he is directly associated in alchemical tradition with Ruach, Prana and Eveer.

We should remember also that the transmission of the Holy Spirit is traditionally associated with the laying on of hands. This tradition is behind the practices of those branches of the Christian Church which accept the doctrine of Apostolic Succession. What is transmitted is the Spirit, or Prana, and the act of transmission includes the pronouncing of a verbal formula which is understood to become effective through the laying on of the hands of a qualified person. Nor is this doctrine without support from those who have studied the phenomena of mental healing. The final pages of Hudson's LAW OF MENTAL



MEDICINE speak with approval of the findings of Dr. John Hilton, an eminent and perfectly "orthodox" English physician. Hudson writes:

"Dr. Hilton points out that there are two ways of reaching each individual organ of the human body through the nervous system; that is to say, there are two nerve terminals available for treatment by the laying on of hands. One system lies along each side of the spinal column, the nerves projecting to the surface 'from the vertebral canal close to the bones or the intervertebral substances.'

"It is safe to say that by the digital manipulation of these nerve terminals, any organ of the human body may be reached directly. If the operator possesses a sufficient knowledge of the nervous system, he may of course save a little time and labor by selecting the right nerve at once. This, however, is unnecessary from a practical point of view, for the reason that the whole spinal column can be manipulated with but little extra trouble; and the beneficial effect of a treatment of the whole spinal column amply compensates for all the labor expended."

Our own inquiries among successful practitioners of osteopathy and chiropractic have made it evident that something more than mere mechanical adjustment accounts for the varying success of healers trained in these methods of adjustment. When a healer knows what he is doing, and concentrates on sending mental and volitional impulses through the spinal nerve terminals to the organs he is treating, the restoration to normal functioning is both quicker and more lasting.

On the Tree of Life, then, the element of air is represented first of all by Kether, the Crown. Kether is termed the Root of Air, because it corresponds to the highest aspect of Ruach. It is this Ruach which concentrates itself into the Small Point of Yekhidah, the Indivisible One or universal Self. Even this indivisible unity is Qabalistically related to the element of air.

יְחִידָה, the Hebrew spelling of Yekhidah, adds to 37, which is the number of הַבַּל, meaning primarily, "a fleeting breath." The same word means "emptiness, vanity, nothingness," and this confirms what we have said concerning the identity between the element of air and אֵין, En, the No-Thing. As a proper name, הַבַּל is Abel.

Again, the element of air is referred, as Ruach, to Tiphareth, the sixth Sephirah, where it stands for the vital principle concentrated as the personal Ego. One spelling of the proper name Koor, or Hur, is simply a reversal of Ruach (Koor, רוּחַ : חוּר, Ruach). Furthermore, Koor means "whiteness," and in one scale of color, Kether, the seat of Yekhidah, the universal Self, is represented as White Brilliance.

The same correspondence between whiteness and the element of air is found in the third point on the Tree of Life corresponding to this element, for Yesod, seat of the automatic consciousness, the secondary or animal self, called also the Vital Soul, is referred also to Lebanah, the Sphere of the Moon, and the root-meaning of לְבָנָה, Lebanah, is "the white, or pale, one."



# THE GREAT WORK

## THE ELEMENT OF AIR (4)

### Lesson Twenty-eight

Through the association of Ruach with the letter Aleph, it is evident that Qabalists regard the element of air as being the connecting link between the universal SELF, Yekhidah, seated in Kether, and the life-force, Chaiah, attributed to Chokmah. The life-force in the path of Aleph is the whirling motion generated in Kether by the concentration of the Limitless Light. The same force manifests itself in the macrocosm as the movement of the heavenly bodies. In the microcosm, this whirling force manifests as the circulation of the life-force through the organisms of the various creatures, vegetable, animal and human.

Again, since the element of air is associated with Gemimi, it must be the fundamental essence of the path of the letter Zain, which connects Binah, the Sphere of Saturn, with Tiphareth, the Sphere of the Sun. Here, also, the significance of Hebrew nouns confirms the interpretation. For Neshamah, posited in the third Sephirah, Binah, has for its basic meaning "breathing," and is so used in Genesis 7:22 and in 1 Kings 17:17. Thus the link between Binah and Tiphareth, the path of the letter Zain, is essentially an expression of the power of the element of air, just as is the link between Kether and Chokmah, the path of the letter Aleph.

The association of air with Libra establishes this element as being fundamental in the path of the letter Lamed, which connects Geburah with Tiphareth. This suggests that the fiery energy of the Sphere of Mars is connected with the radiance of the Sphere of the Sun by means of air. Something like this is intimated by the fact that 300, the number of the character ש, Shin, is also the value of the words Ruach Elohim, "Life-Breath of the Creative Powers."

That is to say, this Qabalism indicates a correspondence between the elements of fire and air. In alchemical symbolism, this correspondence is suggested by the fact that both fire and air are represented by upright equilateral triangles. Fire is the simple triangle. Air is a triangle with a cross-bar, like the letter A.

The correspondence between the element of air and the sign Aquarius makes this element related to the path of Tzaddi. This path carries the force of the seventh Sephirah, Netzach, the Sphere of Venus, to the ninth circle on the Tree of Life, Yesod, the Sphere of the Moon. Yesod is the seat of Nephesh Chaiah, the Breath of Life, or Vital Soul, and the level of consciousness it represents is the automatic or secondary consciousness which governs the functions of the physical body.

In one sense the path of Tzaddi is complementary to the path of Libra. The latter takes the Mars force of the fifth Sephirah into Tiphareth, where that force is manifested in the self-conscious activity of the personal ego. The path of Tzaddi carries the Venus force of the seventh Sephirah (complementary to the Mars force of the fifth Sephirah) into Yesod. In Yesod, this force of the desire nature expresses itself through the working of the automatic consciousness.



Students of Tarot should observe that the kneeling woman in Key 17, corresponding to the path of Tzaddi, is the same yellow-haired woman who is called Justice in Key 11, and she is also the Empress of Key 3. Hence we find that in some versions of Tarot Key 17 is called Venus-Urania.

Note that Tiphareth, the Sphere of the Sun, and Yesod, the Sphere of the Moon, are the only Sephiroth corresponding to the element of air itself. Connect this with what has been said of the first and last letters of Ruach, and with the alchemical dictum that the Great Work is accomplished by means of the Sun and Moon. If all this seems to be rather abstruse, remember that even in these days it is forbidden to do more in writing than to lead the alert student to his own discovery of the secret. The innermost mystery cannot be put into words, because it has to do with super-physical experience, and there are no words for that.

Yet there are some matters which might conceivably be put into plain language, but this will never be done. Whoever knows these things knows also: 1. that alchemy deals with subtle forces which are susceptible to dangerous misuse; 2. that what might be called the moral stupidity of persons who would misuse these forces is precisely what prevents them from being able to take the hints given in the writings of alchemists. He who is ethically prepared to wield the powers which alchemy puts at his disposal will understand what is merely suggested in these pages, and in the classic literature of alchemy.

Another clue to the inner mystery of the element of air is to be found in the astrological rulerships and exaltations of the zodiacal signs corresponding to this element. Mercury rules Gemini. Venus rules Libra, and Saturn is exalted in that sign. Saturn and Uranus rule Aquarius. Uranus is also connected with the path of the letter Aleph.

The three body centers corresponding to these planets are dominant in the control of the element of air. They are:

1. The pineal gland, the brain center connected with the vibrations of Mercury and Uranus;
2. The throat center, associated with the planet Venus;
3. The Saturn center at the base of the spine.

According to the allegory of the Rosicrucian FAMA FRATERNITATIS, Brother C.R. began his journey to the Holy Land in company with a certain Brother P.A.L., who died at Cyprus, the reputed birthplace of Venus. The crucial work of transmutation, represented by the death of P.A.L., occurs in the Venus center, and since P.A.L. is a simple Qabalistic blind for the letter-name Aleph (ALP), what is to be understood by the death of P.A.L. at Cyprus is the dissolution of the airy essence represented by Aleph, the letter corresponding to the path uniting Kether and Chokmah on the Tree of Life.

This path relates also to the planet Uranus, and Uranus is one of the two planets ruling the sign Aquarius, represented in Tarot by a picture having Venus-Urania for its central point of interest. We must, therefore, infer that what is thus pictured in Tarot and inferred in the allegory is worth careful consideration.



Now, Key 17 and the letter Tzaddi relate to meditation which is never perfected without breath control. Furthermore, one of the alchemical symbols for dissolution is the familiar astrological symbol for Aquarius; and dissolution is a word synonymous with death. In short, Brother P.A.L.'s death at Cyprus is a reference to alchemical dissolution.

Among the airy signs, Libra is the only one which is the place of exaltation of a planet. In Libra, Saturn is exalted, and Saturn holds with Uranus the rulership of Aquarius.

In the Tarot symbols, moreover, Saturn is represented by Key 21, and the central figure of that Key is a blonde woman, representing yet another aspect of Venus-Urania. You will remember, also, that this dancer in Key 21, though outwardly feminine, is said to be androgyne. Furthermore, in our version of Tarot the figure named the Fool, representing the path of Aleph and its airy essence, is so drawn that its actual gender cannot be determined. For what the Fool symbolizes is above and beyond all distinctions of gender.

Again, the Sphere of Saturn on the Tree of Life is the third Sephirah, Binah, and in Tarot the number 3 is represented by the Empress, who typifies Venus. Binah, moreover, is called "Mother" by Qabalists, and to Binah they assign Neshamah, that aspect of the one Life-Breath which manifests itself as intuition.

Nor have occult students failed to observe that the very word Binah, **בִּינָה**, if the dot or Dagesh be left out of the center of the first letter, would be pronounced Veenah. We do not wish to over-emphasize this point, but it should be remembered that more than one sound resemblance has been part of the Qabalistic and alchemical tradition.

It is denied by modern scholarship, with good reason, that there is any actual etymological relation between the Latin Jove (pronounced Yoveh) and the Semitic **יְהוָה** (conjecturally pronounced Yahveh). Nor is there any real connection among the words Hermes and Hiram and Hermit. On the other hand, there is absolute certainty that in medieval mystery schools the fact (which is a real fact) that **יְהוָה** and Jove are the Hebrew and Latin words which sum up a similar conception of God, was noticed and used. So, also, the fact that Hermes and Hiram and Hermit have certain resemblances in sound is actually one clue to the meaning of Key 9 in Tarot. Similar instances might be multiplied at great length.

What is positively certain is that there is an occult correspondence between what is meant in alchemy, magic and astrology by "Venus," and what is meant by "Saturn." We have given only a small selection from the great number of hints which are to be found in occult writings.

The Saturn center in man's body is the location of the residual energy known in the yoga philosophy and in the Tantras as Kundalini Shakti. This is the coiled-up force, the serpent power, which has to be raised or sublimated. It is the ruling force actually at work in the process of meditation connected with the sign Aquarius, and symbolized in Tarot by Key 17.



The Kundalini Shakti (Saturn) is exalted in Libra, because it is the force which is sublimated and perfected in its operation by the mental and physical processes connected with that sign. Furthermore, the very symbol for Libra is the alchemical symbol for sublimation. The process is shown by writers on alchemy to be one in which measure and proportion are of great importance, and one of the meanings of the verb librate is "to weigh." It is now obsolete, but was current when many of the alchemical books were written.

Many persons can estimate closely the actual weight of things by lifting them. Indeed, one of the roots of the English verb "weigh" is the Icelandic vaga, "to move, to carry, to lift." So also the primary, but obsolete, meaning of "weigh" is given by Webster as "to bear up; raise; lift."

Transferred to mental processes, weighing and pondering are words which mean "to consider or examine for the purpose of forming an opinion or coming to a conclusion." Similarly, the word meditation is related to the verb mete, meaning "to measure." The purpose of this mental weighing and pondering is the attainment of a state of rest, and this state results from the equilibration of what the books on yoga call "pairs of opposites."

It would be erroneous, however, to suppose that the alchemical operation is limited to mental activities. It has its physical and physiological manifestations also. Hence the student will do well to familiarize himself with the bodily functions which are said by astrologers to be governed by Libra.

In the alchemical operation, the bodily changes effected by superior control of the organs governed by Libra make use of the force known to yogis as Kundalini Shakti. They lift up, or exalt, this force (Saturn), and this work is under the immediate control of states of consciousness which modify the function of the Venus center in the throat, and produce a specific effect upon the secretions of glands, also located in the throat, which are under control of the Venus center.

To sum up, then, we may say that the term air, in alchemy, designates primarily the etheric Life-Breath called Prana in Sanskrit and Ruach in Hebrew. Secondly, it stands for the atmospheric air (in Hebrew, Eveer, in Sanskrit, Vayu).

The alchemical process is one which has to do principally with control of these two aspects of the Life-Breath. The methods of control are both mental and physical. They are directed mentally, and are thus applied to the modification of the physical body of the alchemist himself.

In this work is utilized the residual energy, coiled up in the Saturn center at the base of the spine. The work itself is performed chiefly through the functions of bodily organs in the area governed by Libra, and it results in certain changes in the chemistry of the blood. Other chemical changes are effected by the functions of glands in the throat, and the whole work is supervised and controlled by means of mental states whose organ of expression is the Venus center. This control is a work which depends on the production of mental images, and the equilibration of these images after they have been produced. These are the "copper coins," or "coins of Venus," of which mention has been made in earlier lessons of this series.

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# THE GREAT WORK

## THE ELEMENT OF EARTH (1)

### Lesson Twenty-nine

In his ANTHROPOSOPHIA THEOMAGICA, Thomas Vaughan writes:

"When I speak of a natural triplicity, I speak not of kitchen-stuff---those three pet principles, Water, Oil and Earth---but I speak of celestial, hidden natures, known only to absolute magicians, whose eyes are in the center, not in the circumference, and in this sense every element is threefold. For example, there is a threefold earth; first there is the 'elementary earth,' then there is the 'celestial earth,' and, lastly, the 'spiritual earth.' The influences of the spiritual earth by mediation of the celestial are united to the terrestrial, and are the true cause of life and vegetation. These three are the fundamentals of Art and Nature. The first is a visible, tangible substance---pure, fixed and incorruptible---of quality cold, but by application of a superior agent, dry, and by consequence a fit receptacle of moisture. This is 'Created Aleph,' the true 'Adamic Earth,' the basis of every building in Heaven and Earth. It answers to God the Father, being the natural foundation of the creature, as He is the supernatural. Without this, nothing can be perfected in Magic. The second principle is the infallible Magnet, the Mystery of Union. By this all things may be attracted, whether physical or metaphysical, be the distance never so great. This is Jacob's ladder; without this there is no ascent or descent, either influential or personal. The absence of this I conceive to be that Gulf between Abraham and Dives. This answers to God the Son, for it makes inferiors and superiors communicate. But there is not one in ten thousand knows either the substance or use of this nature. The third principle is properly no principle. It is not 'from whom,' but 'by which all things are.' This can do all in all, and the faculties thereof are not to be expressed. It answers to the Holy Ghost, for amongst naturals it is the only agent and artificer.

"Now he that knows these three perfectly, with their several graduations, or annexed links, which differ not in substance, but complexion—he that can reduce their impurities to one sincere consistence, and their multiplicities to a spiritual, essential simplicity, he is an absolute complete magician, and in full possibility to all strange, miraculous performances."

The same writer, in MAGICA ADAMICA, says:

"The four elements are the objects, and, implicitly, the subjects of man, but the earth is invisible. I know the common man will stare at this, and judge me not very sober when I affirm the earth, which of all things is most gross and palpable, to be invisible. But, on my Soul, it is so, and, which is more, the eye of man never saw the earth, nor can it be seen without art. To make this element visible is the greatest secret in Magic, for it is a miraculous Nature, and of all others the most holy, according to that computation of Trismegistus—"the Heaven, the Aether, the Air, and the most sacred earth." As for this feculent, gross body upon which we walk, it is a compost and no earth, but it hath earth in it, and even that also is not our Magical Earth. In a word, all the elements are visible but one, namely the earth, and when thou hast attained to so much perfection as to know why God hath placed the earth in abscondito,



thou hast an excellent figure to know God himself, and how he is visible, and how invisible."

Thomas Vaughan was a Qabalist, and there is evidence that he was one of the few who made contact with the anonymous authors of the Rosicrucian manifestoes. Hence what he says of the element of Earth becomes clear enough in the light of Qabalistic tradition.

The latter develops this statement in Genesis: "The earth was without form and void." That is to say, the Qabalistic idea of the primal substance which is manifested in all things is that of absolute emptiness of form. And since whatever has no form cannot possibly be seen, Thomas Vaughan must be right when he says the true Earth is invisible. Specifically, he writes of the spiritual Earth which Qabalists attribute, first of all, to the entire Supernal Triad of the Sephiroth, namely, Kether, Chokmah and Binah. Every one of these is said to be the Root of an element. Kether is the Root of Air, Chokmah is the Root of Fire, and Binah is the Root of Water. Thus these three elements are, so to say, derived from the Magical Earth, which is the root of them all.

Observe, also, that the alchemical Tree of Life assigns Mercury to Kether, Sulphur to Chokmah, and Salt to Binah. Hence these three must somehow be related to the elementary Roots we have just been considering, and must also be derived from the primal Magical Earth. The spiritual earth mentioned by Vaughan is the aspect of this first element presented by Kether; the celestial earth of the same author corresponds to Chokmah; and his elementary earth to Binah.

To know these three perfectly, with their several graduations, or annexed links, is to have reproduced in oneself the states of consciousness represented by the Tree of Life, for the "annexed links" are, of course, none other than the seven Sephiroth which depend from the Supernal Triad.

Need we say that the knowledge here mentioned is not mere familiarity with the Tree of Life scheme, no matter how extensive may be one's acquaintance with the various attributions? Such memorizing is an indispensable preliminary, and takes considerable time. Few persons will undertake it, and we believe Vaughan was too optimistic when he said that not one in ten thousand knows the substance and use of the second aspect of the alchemical earth. Years of endeavor to persuade occult students to learn by heart the attributions of the Tree of Life have forced upon us the conclusion that not one in fifty thousand will do so. On the other hand, we know that the few who really do this work will reap the harvest.

Why, after all, should it be otherwise? Nothing offers so much as does Ageless Wisdom. No other treasure so vast was ever put at human disposal. Surely it must have a high price, must demand real effort from him who aspires to possess it. The price is not money, nor anything else in the world's false measure of values, but it is a price, nevertheless. In one sense, to be sure, the treasure is a free gift to anyone who will take it, but the gift cannot be received by him who will not give all that he is in return.

So, in our present undertaking, we begin with the alphabet of Tarot, and then go on



to the Tree of Life and the Grades of the True and Invisible Rosicrucian Order. Our quest now takes us into the fields of alchemy and magic.

Here and there, one finds a student who really enters into the spirit of the undertaking, and such an one may even now have made demonstrations of the practicality of the work. The others--but why pursue a painful topic further? The gist of the matter is that the only way one may prepare himself for the Great Work is to make the alphabetical, Tarot and Tree of Life attributions so thoroughly his own that they become part of his very flesh and blood.

Even this is but a preparation, no more than the planting of seed. Growth, flowering and fruitage come after; and it is of fruitage we speak when we refer to the alchemist's reproduction in himself of the states of consciousness represented by the thirty-two paths of Wisdom. He who achieves this is truly "an absolute complete magician, and in full possibility to all strange, miraculous performances."

Vaughan says again, in LUMEN DE LUMINE:

"'And the earth,' saith Moses, was without form and void. Hence I infer that the earth he speaks of was a mere rudiment and principle of this earth which I now see, for this present earth is neither void nor without form. I conclude, then, that the Mosaical earth was the virgin Sulphur, which is an earth without form, for it hath no determined figure."

In this connection, note that the book AESCH METZAREPH assigns Sulphur to Chokmah, and that though alchemical earth is attributed to the whole Supernal Triad, as we said before, it is specially assigned to Chokmah also. The Hebrew word for "earth" is eretz, spelled Aleph, Resh, Tzaddi, ארץ. It is essentially Life, or Aleph. (Here note that on the Tree of Life the path of Aleph begins in Kether, to which is assigned alchemical Mercury, and completes itself in the second Sephirah, Chokmah, which corresponds to Sulphur. Sulphur is the pure action principle, the same as the Rajas of the yogis.) The alchemical earth is manifest also in the dynamic energy of suns and stars, typified by the attribution of the sun to Resh, the second letter of eretz. Here, again, we find that Chokmah is the Sphere of the Zodiac, or sphere of the "highways of the stars." Finally, alchemical earth is the root of human existence, represented by the relation between the letter Tzaddi and the sign Aquarius, symbolized by that living creature, or Cherub, which has the face of a man. Thus we may understand that alchemical earth is the root of our personal life-force, and here once more we see that Qabalists attribute Chaiah, the life-force, to Chokmah.

In Tarot, the noun ארץ, eretz, is represented by the sequence, Fool--Sun--Star, the Keys numbered 0, 19 and 17. Alchemical earth is the concrete, definite expression of that inner urge which drives the Life-Breath on from peak to peak of manifestation. The same element has in it a quality which will eventually lead all humanity away from the limitations which at present seem to hedge us in. It is, indeed from the intrinsic nature of this element that come all the impulses which are, in this Aquarian Age, bringing about the unfoldment of the higher powers of man, as expressed in the axiom, "That which is above is as that which is below, and that which is below is as that



which is above, for the performance of the miracles of the One Thing." This axiom is represented by the alchemical and astronomical symbol for Aquarius, two identical wavy lines, one above the other.

Earth is attributed also to Malkuth on the Tree of Life, and this tenth Sephirah is the terminus of the path of Tav, to which the same element is attributed. Key 21 in Tarot, the World, corresponds to the path of Tav, and to this letter and Key the planet Saturn is also attributed. This shows a close connection between alchemical earth and Saturn. This is found in the Saturnine power of condensation and limitation, which operates also through Binah, the Sphere of Saturn. This Saturnine power is what gives definite expression to the inner urge of the Life-Breath. Hence the path of the Saturnine letter, Tav, is called the Administrative Intelligence. It is the aspect of consciousness which enables us to participate in the cosmic administration.

"Our" earth, then, is not the earth of the uninitiated. When we say "earth," the noun designates a conception different from what the same word means to the man in the street. It is not that the real earth is altered, or that there are two earths, a false one and a true. Rather is it that we conceive our earth after another manner than do the uninstructed.

The key to the difference in our conception is to be found in THE EMERALD TABLET, where we read: "Its power is integrating, if it be turned into earth." And again: "It ascends from earth to heaven, and descends to earth again, and receives the power of the superiors and of the inferiors."

Compare this last with what is said by Vaughan concerning the second principle, or aspect, of alchemical earth. He declares it to be the Mystery of Union, and the Jacob's ladder which makes inferiors and superiors communicate. He is writing specifically of Chokmah, the seat of the life-force, Chaiah, which is the connecting medium between all forms of manifestation.

All things in the universe are inter-related. Nothing stands alone. The celestial order of the stars is expressed in every detail of the functions of human personality. And truly, he who knows the secret of this connecting relationship knows how to attract all things, whether physical or metaphysical. Thus to Chokmah the Rosicrucian system attributes the Grade of Magus, for, in all simplicity, magic is a mode of life, a way of living in which the magician is a medium for conscious expression of the irresistible power of the heavenly order.

An alchemist has no thought that the earth is his enemy. He does not feel that it is a burden, that it weighs him down. He has no desire to escape from it. For he knows that the solidity, the rigidity, the apparent fixity of physical forms are but veils for spiritual energy. The alchemist's earth is a synthesis of fire, air and water. Or, to speak even more plainly, where the uninitiated see dirt, metal, stones, and so on, an alchemist sees, with the eyes of mind, the One Thing, from which all things have their birth by adaptation.

Thus the Tarot Key which represents the element of earth is the World, and on its



very surface this picture bears a message of joyous freedom. The other three Keys which correspond to this element are: the Hierophant, representing Taurus; the Hermit, corresponding to Virgo; and the Devil, symbolizing Capricorn.

To the last of these, we find attributed in symbolism the ass, an animal which also represents the First Matter. Furthermore, Key 15 is really a symbol for the Great Magical Agent, of which Eliphas Levi wrote: "It is the Devil of exoteric dogmatism." Key 15 is a symbol of the Divine Life, as that Life is misunderstood by the uninitiated.

We have mentioned this, in order to point out the fact that in Christian symbols of liberation, the Nativity (traditionally associated with the sign Capricorn) is pictured thus: the Virgin, holding the Christ-child, sits in a stable, between an ox and an ass. This is a representation of Virgo, between Taurus and Capricorn. The manifestation of the liberating power of That which was, is, and will be (the literal meaning of the name Jesus is Self-existence liberates) is thus shown, to those who have eyes to see, as resulting from the combined activities of the three phases of the magical earth.

The Devil in Tarot represents the element of earth, as it is misunderstood by those who are misled by superficial appearances. Their misunderstanding, remember, is due to their ignorance of man's place in the cosmic order. Mentally, they have reversed their own true position, and consequently everything in their experience seems to be chaotic and topsy-turvy.

Their eyes, as Vaughan would say, are in the circumference, not in the center. That is to say, they accept without criticism the superficial appearances of the world around them. This is hinted at by one of the meanings of the letter-name Ayin namely, "surface show, or outward appearance." They who bring to bear the power of the "universal solvent," alchemical Mercury, penetrate beneath the surface of things to the Reality at the center, and these are, as Vaughan says, absolute magicians.

Hence to the Devil is assigned also the idea of the Renewing Intelligence. For it is in the earth, even in the solid physical forms which surround us, that the wise discern the actual presence of the power which makes all things new. So long as we misunderstand, this power seems to be our adversary. So long as we misinterpret, it threatens us, and seems to hold us in bondage; but from it comes forth liberation when we know its true nature.

The sign Capricorn is ruled by Saturn, corresponding to the letter Tav, and to Key 21. Thus we may conclude that the essential quality of the element of earth is the Saturnine quality, even as we have seen earlier in this lesson. Boehme, in AURORA (8:41), confirms this:

"In the earth," he writes, "there is, above all, the acrid quality. This contracts the salnitre, and solidifies the earth, causing it to become a corporeal being, forming therein also bodies of various kinds, such as rocks, metals, and manifold roots."

In Lesson 30 we shall continue our study of the alchemical element of earth.



# THE GREAT WORK

## THE ELEMENT OF EARTH (2)

### Lesson Thirty

The acrid quality is what Boehme elsewhere calls astringency. This he definitely associates with Saturn when he says: "As the sun is the heart of the life and an origin of all the spirits in the body of this world, likewise is Saturn a beginning of all corporeity and tangibility. Thus he does not derive his beginning and descent from the sun, but his origin is the earnest, acrid, and severe anxiety of the whole body of this world."

-- AURORA, 26:1

In Qabalah, Saturn, through its connection with the letter Tav, is linked up with the idea represented by the noun center. For to Tav is attributed "the palace of holiness in the midst," and this is symbolized by the center of an imaginary cube, the crossing point of all its thirteen axes of symmetry.

To Tav, also, Qabalists assign the pair of opposites, Dominion and Slavery. Hence it should be evident that the point of control is interior, or central, and that the power which sets us free is actually the power described by Boehme as "a beginning of all corporeity and tangibility." Hence Vaughan says that to make the element of earth visible is the greatest secret in magic. Note that he specifically calls this element holy, and thus echoes the Qabalistic phrase which speaks of the "palace of holiness in the midst," in reference to the letter which represents both Saturn and the element of earth.

The planet Mars is exalted in Capricorn. That is to say, the highest manifestation of the fiery strength symbolized by this planet is through the earthy quality of Capricorn.

As a result of your Tarot studies, you have come to think of Mars as being the force which overthrows the structures of false knowledge and misinterpretation. The same force is represented by the red feather in the picture of the Fool, where it stands for truth in action. It appears again as the red outer robe of the Magician, where it intimates that the full use of the mental power symbolized by Key 1 involves active application of knowledge, gained by concentration, to the end that error may be destroyed. In the practical work of yoga and alchemy, moreover, the active utilization of the Mars force is of utmost importance, as we have seen again and again in our earlier studies. When our vision is at the center, we can direct this fiery energy, and integrate it in the element of earth so as to animate a progressive series of beautiful forms. This is the true secret of magical liberation.

The second of the three Keys corresponding to the element of earth is the Hermit, which represents the mutable sign Virgo. Remember that in the fundamental Tarot tableau, the Hermit is the central Key in a vertical row which has the High Priestess (a virgin) at the top, and the Tower at the bottom. The High Priestess represents the principle at work through the law symbolized by the Hermit, to bring about the effect which is indicated by the Tower. In one sense, the High Priestess stands for the First Matter, for her name means "Chief Feminine Elder," or "First Feminine Power," and we have learned that in yoga, as in alchemy, the First Matter is given feminine titles. Thus yogis speak of Prakritis as being both Virgin and Mother, and the same words occur again and again in alchemical descriptions of the First Matter.



Now, as we have said, the zodiacal sign Virgo rules that part of the human body where the alchemical work begins. In the small intestine is found the "virgin's milk," chyle, which is the actual substance on which alchemists work in order to bring about subtle changes in their own bodies, so as to effect their liberation from delusion.

These changes are under the direction of the alchemist's self-consciousness, represented by the Magician, symbolizing Mercury, the planet which rules Virgo and is exalted in that sign. The initial steps in the work are intellectual. Yogi and alchemist must both first learn the theory of their work. They must study books in which masters of the art have set down the principles which govern the operation.

Nothing is more insisted on by all writers on alchemy than this intellectual preparation. They tell us that before we make any attempt to practice we must familiarize ourselves with the writings of several good authors. The books must be read many times, and the reader must endeavor to discover the various points on which the authors agree. We are assured that the meaning of these cryptic writings seems to reveal itself to those who have the patience to read and re-read the texts, and sufficient mental control to ponder deeply what is read.

The books contain only the seed-ideas. This puzzles some readers, and annoys others. "Why can't the thing be put in plain language?" is the complaint of the impatient. The simple answer is that the truths of alchemy, in their full meaning, are beyond the power of human language to express.

Cryptic as they are, however, the alchemical terms do serve their purpose adequately. When the words have sunk deep into subconsciousness and have set up the associative process pictured by the High Priestess, the aspirant to alchemy becomes aware of the truth. In a sense his own subconsciousness gives him the necessary knowledge. The words of the books do not, because they cannot, convey the information. They do set going mental processes which bring this knowledge to the surface, from within.

Thus it is that mere book study will never make an alchemist. The full use of the Mercurial self-consciousness requires the aspirant to devote much of his time to attentive, concentrated observation of what is going on in the world round him. Concentration is indispensable, as is made evident by the picture of the Magician. By concentration the student learns how to focus and direct the current of energy which he draws down from superconscious levels.

Having learned this, and being made familiar with the law of psychology which says: "Subconsciousness is always, and uncritically, amenable to suggestion," he then applies the current of mental force to the Virgo region of his own body. He has learned of the marvelous potencies of that area. He has been taught that the alchemist himself is the primary subject of the Great Work. He knows that he can, by mere expectation and demand, supercharge his organism with subtle energies which, rightly used, will transform him from a tyro into an adept.

In all this he is at work with the subtle, magical earth which Vaughan calls invisible. He is employing the forces which on the Tree of Life are associated with Chokmah--the



celestial light-vibrations which modern physicists proclaim to be the actual material out of which are built all the solid, tangible things of this world. The magical earth is what Tarot symbolizes by the lantern of the Hermit, and the rays of light streaming from it.

The Hermit himself is a symbol of the Great Attainment. He stands at the top of the same high mountain which is shown in the background of Keys 6 and 8. This is the mystical mountain of the Rosicrucians. It has several names, among them, Biagenos, which has been explained as signifying, "life-giving," or "generating strength."

To this mountain ascends the path shown in Keys 14 and 18, and in the latter the path is connected with the Corporeal Intelligence, to indicate that the alchemical work is a process which incorporates spiritual forces into the alchemist's body--a process, moreover, which the Qabalistic commentary on this particular path of wisdom designates by the verb "inform," in order to intimate that the formative activities whereby an alchemist transmutes his physical vehicle are carried on from within.

It must be repeated often that alchemy is not a purely metaphysical pursuit. Its theory and practice are based on the real, as opposed to the apparent, nature of the physical universe. Its objective is attained when the adept becomes master of the forces and forms of the physical world. As THE EMERALD TABLET says: "Its power is integrating, if it be turned into earth."

Failure to perceive this has led many to waste their lives in pursuit of vain fancies. The Way of Attainment is by no means a way of escape from the element of earth. It is the Way of Understanding, the method whereby one gains knowledge of the true nature of this hidden element. For such knowledge is what leads to ability to determine what forms the One Thing shall assume on the physical plane. The essence of that knowledge is this:

All things are expressions of the Primal Will. All things are embodiments of the invisible earth, and the invisible earth is radiant energy. Hence the alchemical work is no vain endeavor to conquer nature by the exercise of man's personal will. Rather is it based on the fact that "natural law" is nothing other than the operation of the only true Will-force.

By obedience to law we come into union with the cosmic directive power. This directive power is pictured in Tarot as a beneficent overseer watching the upward progress of the aspiring climbers along the Way of Return. Here it may be well to remind you that, in Tarot, the Hermit and the Emperor, who rules the physical plane, are one and the same.

The third Tarot Key corresponding to the element of earth is the Hierophant, symbolizing the fixed, earthy sign Taurus. This Key represents intuition, and here is a hint that the burden of the esoteric "inner teaching" has largely to do with the real nature of the element of earth. Furthermore, since this Key is associated with a Hebrew letter to which is assigned the function of hearing, we see that it must be connected with what yogis call Akasha. Akasha is the fifth principle or element, which alchemists call Quintessence. Here is a plain hint that the inner mystery concerning alchemical earth



has to do with sound-vibration. In this connection we may recall the Oriental doctrine: "Through sound the world stands."

Compare this with Boehme's declaration to the effect that in the differentiation of the divine powers these powers become audible. He teaches also that sound is the characteristic of intelligent life. Furthermore, he writes:

"When the Father speaks His Word--that is to say, when He generates His Son--which is done continually and eternally, that Word first of all takes its origin in the first or acrid quality, where it becomes conceived."

The acrid or astringent quality is Saturn, and the conception of the Logos or Divine Idea in this quality is referred to Binah, the Mother. Binah is the seat of the activity which has been compared elsewhere in this course to the Thomistic finitizing principle and to the Maya Shakti of the Hindus. The essential nature of this activity is Saturnine, in that it causes differentiation.

Thus in St. John's Gospel it is said: "That which hath been made was life in him (the Logos)." The same writer asserts that nothing is, or can be, brought into manifestation save through the Logos--that is to say, through intelligence having sound for its vehicle. Hence yogis teach that Akasha, the subtle principle of hearing, is the "mixing bowl of the elements," and is the underlying reality which takes form in whatever appears on any plane.

Albert Einstein has demonstrated that mass and energy are equivalent, and that, in many instances, they may be regarded, for all practical purposes, as being identical. That is to say, the weight or ponderability of a thing is an expression of working power or energy.

This idea, which puzzled many when it was first advanced, is what led to the successful outcome of research in nuclear fission. It is just another example of the fact that Einstein and others working in the same field are simply reviving the ancient occult physics. Here is one of many confirmations of Eliphas Levi's prediction (made in 1859) that science would discover the Astral Light, and in consequence of that discovery, bring about a complete revolution in physics and chemistry. We are in the midst of this revolution which will change the face of our globe and effect profound alterations also in human religions, philosophies, and politics. More important still will be the transformations the new knowledge will bring about in human life and consciousness.

Occultism says that the underlying energy which gives mass and weight to all things, and arouses those sensations which are at the bottom of our notions of substance, is the vibration of radiant energy. What vibrates is regarded by occultists as being living light. This is also the medium or vehicle in which the various rates of vibration are propagated. Occultism does not introduce an additional something which vibrates, like the ether of Sir Oliver Lodge. It holds the view tentatively proposed some years ago by Charles Steinmetz, to the effect that the energy itself is the vibrating entity.

All this may seem to be remote from practical concerns. It is more or less theoretical, if we limit ourselves to the consideration of modern scientific speculation con-



cerning the nature of the physical world. Science has made astonishing progress, considering the materials it works with, and the narrowly restricted field to which it confines itself. For the alchemist, the yogi, the magician, the doctrine that even the hardest and solidest physical objects are forms of sound vibration is by no means merely an inference. It is an experience verified experimentally in all sorts of practical ways. The knowledge gained by this experience makes a decided difference in the outer circumstances and bodily states of persons who are qualified to make the experiments included in the Great Work.

Such persons become qualified as a result of direct instruction from the Inner Voice represented in Tarot by the Hierophant. There is a sense in which it may be said that the Creative Word speaks to us, and instructs us in the practical application of its power, to the end that we may solve our problems. This has been mentioned in our explanations of the symbolism of Key 5. Hence our readers are aware that the Hierophant is said to represent the Triumphant and Eternal Intelligence, because the Inner Voice provides us with what we must know in order to deal intelligently with whatever problems may confront us. The specific knowledge thus received from the Inner Voice is always founded on universal, eternal principles.

All such instruction has to do with the integration of invisible spiritual energy into visible physical forms. This is invariably true of any solution offered by the Inner Voice. Under its guidance, we are always shown how to bring about the embodiment of the Life-power in some specific physical integration.

Astrologically, the sign Taurus is ruled by Venus (Key 3, the Empress). We may therefore infer that the integrating process just mentioned is controlled by the creative mental imagery symbolized by Key 3. Thus it should be evident that what we are discussing in this lesson, the invisible, magical earth, is really the living conscious energy which is shaped metaphysically by our acts of creative imagination.

The exaltation of the Moon in Taurus shows that the Great Work, in so far as it has to do with the magical earth, is really a sort of remembering, or recollection. The laws of life are eternal. We do nothing whatever to alter them. They are in operation, whether we know it or not. When we do recognize them, we are sharing a knowledge which the Universal Mind has never forgotten. Here we may recall the alchemical dictum that the Great Work is an operation of the Sun and Moon performed by the aid of Mercury. Apart from the deeper technical significance of this statement, it may be correctly understood as referring to superconsciousness (Sun), subconsciousness (Moon), and self-consciousness (Mercury). As the personification of the intellectual consciousness represented in Tarot by the Magician, Mercury is the co-ordinator of the powers of superconsciousness and subconsciousness. Knowledge of the laws of nature is always derived from the subconscious Akashic record, which is pictured as a book or scroll in the hands of the High Priestess.



# THE GREAT WORK

## THE ELEMENT OF EARTH (3)

### Lesson Thirty-one

Alchemy, a department of magic or theurgy, is the art of utilizing those forms of universal power and consciousness which enable the alchemist to transmute himself. The self-transmutation is not merely metaphysical. It actually changes the alchemist's physical organism to the end that his body may become an instrument for theurgic operations. Forces play through the body of a perfected alchemist which would destroy the organism of a tyro. An alchemist is sensibly aware of these high-tension currents of force. Thus the New Testament story of the woman who was healed by touching the hem of Jesus' robe says he felt virtue go out of him. His feeling was just as definite as any other sensation.

The careful student will do well to devote a good deal of thought to the planetary Tarot Keys mentioned in this lesson. Each of them affects a particular center in the physical body, and evokes the magic power of that center. It will be well to review the lessons in TAROT FUNDAMENTALS and TAROT INTERPRETATION which deal with Keys 21, 16, 1, 3 and 2.

Throughout this lesson we are dealing with the invisible magical earth which we have found to be the same as the Quintessence, or Akasha. In the preceding paragraph are mentioned the Tarot Keys corresponding to the Saturn center at the base of the spine, to the Mars center just below the navel, to the Mercury center, or pineal gland, to the Venus center in the throat, and to the Moon center, or pituitary body. These five centers are specially concerned with the magical earth. The manifestation of the Life-power through them is what enables us to control the forms which are assumed by the invisible earth here in the visible world of the physical plane.

No form of concentration on these physical centers is to be undertaken. Their forces should be evoked and co-ordinated by the use of the corresponding Tarot Keys. In this way the student will avoid the grave dangers which attend any attempt at direct concentration on the physical centers.

Since the numbers of these five Keys total 43, and the least number of 43 is 7, we know that the forces represented by these Keys are related to the symbolism of the Chariot. The correspondences are too involved to be worked out here. However, note that the number 7 itself is related to the planet Saturn through the connection of this number with the idea of rest and the seventh day of the week, which is Saturn's day, the Sabbath.

Again, the letter-name Cheth, representing a fence or hedge, has a relation to the Saturnine finitizing power which has been touched on in this series. This power has its sphere in Binah, the third Sephirah, from which descends the path of the letter Cheth, corresponding to the Chariot.

More recondite is the fact that two wheels are an outstanding feature of Key 7. Among other things, these wheels refer to the choir of angels attributed to Chokmah. These are the **אופנים**, Ophanim, "wheels." The Ophanim are the circuits of the celestial forces, and they are also the circlings of the vital forces in the human body. Only ad-



vanced Qabalists will be able to appreciate the full meaning of this correspondence; but since one has always to make a first acquaintance with a new bit of knowledge, this one is introduced here. You will understand it better as you proceed farther along the path of your work.

The three Keys corresponding to the earthy zodiacal signs bear numbers which add to 29. This number digits to 11, the number of the Key named Justice. Here we must avoid confusion. Ordinarily, we think of Key 11 as a symbol of the element of air, through its connection with the sign Libra. Yet we must remember also that Saturn is exalted in Libra, and that Venus, ruler of the earthy sign Taurus, is also the ruler of Libra. Thus we find forces represented by Key 11 which are elsewhere associated with the element of earth.

Furthermore, Key 11 corresponds to the twenty-second path of wisdom, the Faithful Intelligence, of which it is written: "By it the spiritual powers are caused to multiply." We have already seen that the apparent multiplication of forms is really an effect of the work of the finitizing principle, the Saturnine astringency which is exalted in Libra.

In the fundamental Tarot tableau, Key 11 is the central picture, and represents stabilizing, equilibrating power. In relation to Tarot, this Key has much the same significance that is attributed to the letter Tav when the latter is called "the palace of holiness in the midst."

If we digit the number 11 we have the number 2, representing the High Priestess as a summary of the essence of the earthy signs. The number of the word אֶרֶץ, eretz, is 291, and its digit value, or least number, is 3, which is the value of the letter Gimel, to which the High Priestess is attributed. This is the letter of the path called the Uniting Intelligence, or Conductive Intelligence of Unity. The path of Gimel joins Kether to Tiphareth on the Tree of Life, and it is said to be the "essence of glory."

The Hebrew noun translated "glory" is כְּבוֹד, kabode, a word whose number, 32, refers to the thirty-two paths composing the complete Tree of Life. The fundamental meaning of kabode is "weight," or "mass." Hence the Uniting Intelligence (and consequently any symbol of it, such as the High Priestess) represents the essence of the whole manifestation of the Life-power. It is called "Uniting" because it is the connective medium. From your Tarot studies, moreover, you will remember that Key 2 is one of the symbols for the First Matter.

Thus it should be evident that the invisible, magical earth of Thomas Vaughan is really the mind-stuff, particularly under its aspect of subconsciousness--the Prakriti or Maya-Shakti of the Hindus. Prakriti is what is differentiated as Akasha, Vayu, Agni-Tejas, Apas and Prithivi (to use the yoga classification), or as the Quintessence, fire, water, air and earth.

Of these, the invisible earth is the original mode of the Life-power. It is without form and void, as described in the opening words of the Old Testament. Thus it is symbolically black, or deep indigo, the color attributed to Akasha, Saturn and Capricorn. This color is also that of the radiant darkness named Ain, Ain Suph and Ain Suph Aur, the Nothing, the Limitless, or the Limitless Light. It is also the color of the lower



segment of Malkuth on the Tree of Life, as well as the color given to Binah, the Sphere of Saturn.

Since Binah is the number 3 on the Tree of Life, it has a certain correspondence to any other representation of the number 3. Thus Binah is related to whatever is associated with Gimel, which is 3 in the alphabet. (Note also that on the breast of the High Priestess is an equal-armed cross, the ancient form of Tav, the letter of Saturn.)

To a beginner, these interchanges of numbers and attributions are always confusing, but they are found throughout the Qabalah. Thus it is common to find the letter Vav standing for the Sephirah Tiphareth, because 6 is the value of Vav, and 6 is also the value of Tiphareth.

There is a sense in which each of the first ten Hebrew letters represents the Sephirah having the same number. That is: Aleph (1) corresponds to Kether, Beth (2) to Chokmah, Gimel (3) to Binah, and so on. After the first decade of numbers, the second decade corresponds also to the Sephiroth. That is: Yod (10, reducing to 1) to Kether, Kaph (20, reducing to 2) to Chokmah, Lamed (30, reducing to 3) to Binah, and so on. These correspondences have their full measure of importance, but this is not the place to develop their meaning. We touch upon them here because some of our affiliates may possibly take the hint, and begin to work out the meanings for themselves. This is by far the best way to learn the inner secrets of Qabalah.

The main point to remember is that in both alchemy and magic we are dealing with a system of relationships rooted in the fact which THE EMERALD TABLET expresses by the statement, "All things are from One." Hence all things are aspects or phases of the One Thing, and therefore anything may be, and is, a representative of that One. As Ouspensky puts it, in transcendental logic everything is both A and Not-A at one and the same time.

In our separative, intellectual thinking we have a tendency to conclude that each thing or class of things stands isolated. Qabalah aids us to overcome this radical error by many devices such as those we have just touched on. To the same purpose is the numbering of the Tarot Keys, so that the number which is printed on any Key in the first decade of pictures is always one less than the value of the corresponding letter in the Hebrew alphabet.

Thus it becomes possible to assign the Keys by number to the Tree of Life. In such case Key 0 stands for Ain, the No-Thing, Key 1 is a symbol for Kether, Key 2 represents Chokmah, and so on. There is real system behind this apparent chaos, but beginners always find it difficult.



# THE GREAT WORK

## THE ELEMENT OF EARTH (4)

### Lesson Thirty-two

Every one of the ten Sephiroth is both male and female, or neither male nor female, according to what aspect of its function we may be considering. Kether is feminine, or receptive, with respect to Ain Suph Aur, but masculine, or projective, with respect to Chokmah, and androgyne as the equilibrium between Chokmah and Binah. Similarly, Chokmah is feminine in respect to its being the recipient of the influence from Kether, masculine as projecting its force to Binah, and androgyne as the mediator between Kether and Chesed, the fourth Sephirah.

Gimel, then, and the High Priestess, represent the invisible, magical earth, considered as being the essential principle which tends ever toward objective embodiment. In our lives, the magical earth corresponds to the subconscious level of the Life-power's action, which is the builder and sustainer of our physical and metaphysical embodiments, and the substance, also, of the many forms constituting our environment.

You will remember that the Corporeal Intelligence, pictured in Tarot by Key 18, is entitled The Moon. This establishes a connection between the eighteenth Key and the High Priestess, since the latter corresponds also to the moon.

Again, the number 18 is not only that of the noun 'חַי, Chai, "life," but is also the result of multiplying 2 by 9. That is, what is shown by Key 18 may be taken as the multiplication of the invisible earth, the essence symbolized by the High Priestess, through the operation of forces corresponding to the Hermit. In actual fact, this is so. Our physical embodiment is a development of subconscious powers (High Priestess) through the agency of functions in the Virgo area (Hermit).

Note, moreover, that in astrology, which affords many clues to the inner meaning of alchemy, it is held that the moon (High Priestess) is exalted, or has its most potent expression, in the earthy sign Taurus (the Hierophant). That is to say, the most powerful manifestation of the underlying cosmic substance which, in alchemy, is designated as the invisible earth, is active in sound. For the Hierophant corresponds to the letter Vav, and to the function of hearing, which is the activity of consciousness corresponding to sound.

This takes us a step farther, for, as we have explained in our lessons on SOUND AND COLOR, it is an ancient Hindu doctrine that through sound the world stands. And among the Tattvas, the sonorous ether, Akasha, is the basis of the activities of all the others, so that it corresponds closely to the alchemical First Matter, or Quintessence.

Now, the title, "Hierophant" is derived from a Greek adjective meaning "sacred," and from a verb signifying "to show." The name of Key 5, therefore, intimates that what it pictures is a power that makes visible what would be hidden, but for the operation of this power. And when we remember that the principle of creative imagination which is represented in Tarot by the Empress, corresponding to Venus, is, astrologically, the ruling power in the earthy sign Taurus, typified by Key 5, we may begin to realize something of what is meant by the occult doctrine of the Word. Far from being an abstract



metaphysical speculation, this doctrine means that mental imagery (the Empress), combined with sound-vibration (the Hierophant), is what brings all visible forms into existence.

Here, too, we should remember that in the sequence of Tarot Keys, the Emperor, who is the symbol of the power of sight, follows the Empress, emblem of creative imagination. This takes us back, of course, to the old Hermetic axiom of THE KYBALION: "The ALL is MIND; the Universe is Mental."

Concerning this, THE KYBALION says: "THE ALL (which is the Substantial Reality underlying all the outward manifestations and appearances which we know under the terms of 'The Material Universe;' the 'Phenomena of Life;' 'Matter;' 'Energy;' and, in short, all that is apparent to our material senses) is SPIRIT, which in itself is UNKNOWNABLE and UNDEFINABLE, but which may be considered and thought of as AN UNIVERSAL, INFINITE, LIVING MIND." The same book says also: "The Infinite Mind of the All is the womb of Universes."

In passing, it may be of interest to mention the fact that KYBALION, the title of the book from which these quotations are taken, is a coined word of Greek derivation, chosen because, by sound, it suggests both "Qabalah" and "Cybele." The latter is the name of the Asiatic "mother of the gods," corresponding to Rhea, the earth-goddess who was the wife of Saturn, and the mother of Vesta, Juno, Neptune, Pluto and Jupiter. In Tarot, she is represented by the Empress, by the woman in Key 8, taming a lion, by Justice and by the kneeling water-bearer of Key 17. (The Empress, although she is primarily a symbol for Venus, corresponds also to most of the mother goddesses of ancient mythology.)

In Greek letters, KYBALION is written  $\kappa\upsilon\beta\alpha\lambda\iota\omicron\nu$ , and its numeral value is 583. This is 11 x 53, and since 53 in alchemy is referable both to  $\text{יבן}$ , ehben, stone, and to  $\text{חמה}$ , khammaw, sun, while 11 (as Tarot shows) has to do with equilibration, there is more than a hint here that KYBALION has to do with the Great Work of equilibrating the powers of the Spiritual Sun, so as to produce the Stone of the Wise.

In Hebrew Gematria, 583 is the value of  $\text{טמירא דטמירין}$ , Temira De-Temirin, the Concealed of the Concealed (a title of Kether), and of  $\text{מסתגף}$ , msetagayph, a hermit (lit., "a hidden body"). Both these refer to the ninth Key of Tarot which pictures the Concealed One as the solitary Watcher on high, and gives him a name which is the English equivalent of  $\text{מסתגף}$ .

For though the universe is substantially and essentially mental, this does not mean that the physical plane and its forms are false, or non-existent. On the contrary, it means that the various actualities of the world of appearance which comes forth from the womb of the Infinite, Living Mind through the agency of creative imagination, are in no sense to be denied. They are to be understood, and the delusions resulting from man's misinterpretation of these actualities and their meaning are to be cleared away.

Fundamental to this right understanding is the realization that physical actualities are not opposed to mental states. Alchemy, when we become adept in the Great Work, will not enable us to effect triumphs of mind over matter. What it will do is to enable us to preserve, unbroken, the sequence of creative transformations from mental imagery to the embodiment of our images in physical forms. It will also enable us to speed



up the process so that the elapsed time between the conception of a mental image and its outward manifestation in the world of things will be shortened--in some instances so shortened that the results will seem like miracles to onlookers who do not understand the principles behind the process.

The alchemical earth, then, is the Primal Root of the elements, the Reality which lies behind the Supernal Triad of the Tree of Life. This Triad consists of Kether, the Root of Air, Chokmah, the Root of Fire, and Binah, the Root of Water. Thus the magical earth, the root of these three, can be none other than **אין סוף אור**, Ain Suph Aur, the Limitless Light.

This Limitless Light is the "Virgin Sulphur" mentioned by Thomas Vaughan. And, though Sulphur is assigned to Chokmah, we must remember that Chokmah is also the Sphere of the Highways of the Stars. The cosmic manifestation of alchemical Sulphur is the light of the stars, just as the microcosmic manifestation of the same Sulphur is the life-force of the human body. But the virgin Sulphur is the Limitless Light, which is also the magical earth, without form, of which Thomas Vaughan writes.

So, too, we have found that the initial letter of **ארץ**, eretz, earth, implies that this magical element is essentially a living spirit. (Compare this with our quotation from THE KYBALION.)

Again, from the second letter of **ארץ**, we learn that the alchemical earth is made manifest in the dynamic energy of suns and stars. This letter, moreover, will convey to Tarot students the notion of the regenerative power of the magical earth.

The final letter of **ארץ**, Tzaddi, relates to meditation, and to the occult doctrine that the production of visible forms here on the physical plane is a consequence of a mental process like meditation, which goes on at the subconscious level of the Infinite Mind. Thus the active figure in Key 17 is a yellow-haired woman, identified with Isis-Urania, or the Empress.

The ultimate objective of the process depicted by this Key is associated with the sign Aquarius, the sign of the Man. For the whole cosmic process, according to Ageless Wisdom, begins with the essential idea of MAN, and is directed toward the production of perfected human embodiment of the Life-power.

Thus the very first Key of Tarot shows the gaze of the Fool directed toward a distant goal, so that he looks toward the corner of the picture which, in Keys 10 and 21, is occupied by a man's head, symbol for Aquarius. Again, the Hermit is a symbol of the perfected adeptship we have just mentioned, and all our studies of Key 9 have had to do with the hidden processes whereby the body-building powers associated with the sign Virgo are brought under the control of self-conscious awareness, personified as Mercury.

The light in the Hermit's lantern is the Limitless Light, or magical earth, and one important thing to remember concerning this is that the magical earth is visible to those who have the purified sight which is one consequence of success in the Great Art.

Thus the Hermit is not only a light-bearer, but likewise a seer, and his seership is



what makes a correspondence between him and the Emperor in Key 4. He is a symbol of the Universal Will, and the essence of that Will is the Constituting Intelligence which establishes order throughout the field of outward manifestation.

To the uninitiated the experience of the sages seems to be supernatural. Yet all adepts agree that there is nothing supernatural about it. This experience is metaphysical in the strict meaning of this term because the sages have knowledge of what is beyond the range of the physical senses.

What needs continual emphasis is that this is actual knowledge, not speculation. The changed body of an alchemist registers rates of vibration which are imperceptible to his untrained brother, just as a highly sensitized photographic film registers lights and shades, and even color-values, which could not be captured by the relatively slow and dull reactions of early daguerrotypes.

The alchemical earth is a reality, even though it is invisible to sight which is limited to the physical plane. It is the one universal substance ready to take any form which may be impressed on it by the imagination of a true Artist. It is the life of all creatures, the link between all forms, the radiant energy which performs all work in the manifest universe. It is ready to your hand as soon as you have eyes to see it and skill to use it.

To put you on the right course which leads to the development of the necessary skill will be the purpose of the succeeding lessons of this series. For now, having devoted ourselves to a survey of the principles, and a consideration of the materials with which an alchemist works, we are ready to begin our study of the alchemical process.

Before you receive the next lesson, we suggest that you re-read, rather quickly, the lessons on the First Matter and the four elements. You will find, as you do so, that many points hitherto obscure will clear themselves up. The reason for this, of course, is that you yourself have been subjected to the alchemical operation pictured in Key 14 ever since you began this course. You are a different person from what you were when you read the first lesson. The difference may not be so very noticeable; but if you undertake this review, you will have unmistakable proofs that your understanding and insight really are deeper than before.



# THE GREAT WORK

## THE ALCHEMICAL PROCESS (1)

### Lesson Thirty-Three

"Thou shalt separate the earth from the fire, the subtle from the gross, suavely, and with great ingenuity. It ascends from earth to heaven, and descends to earth again, and receives the strength of the superiors and of the inferiors."

These words of THE EMERALD TABLET summarize the whole alchemical process. Up to this point these lessons have given you some account of the forces and materials utilized in the Great Work. From this lesson, up to the completion of the course, we shall be concerned with the actual performance of the work.

The Pythagorean Triangle, shown in Lesson 9, is an important alchemical symbol. It relates to the statement that the First Matter, and the work which modifies that Matter, are not two separate things, but ONE which is also THREE, FOUR and FIVE. As we have said in the same place, this idea is symbolized also by the Great Pyramid. To gain the top of the Pyramid is to reach the single point at which the sides and the sloping boundary lines converge. Thus the ascent of the Pyramid, as a symbol of the Great Work, represents the attainment of the UNITY which is the synthesis of the powers represented by the four faces, which correspond to the four alchemical elements.

In the Pythagorean Triangle the number 3 is represented by the descending line attributed to Osiris, the Father. The base line, that of Isis, the Mother, represents the number 4. The ascending hypotenuse, dedicated to Horus, the son of Osiris and Isis, stands for the number 5. The sum of these three lines is twelve units of equal length, corresponding to the twelve equal sides of a dodecagon, which is a geometrical figure that symbolizes the twelve signs of the zodiac. To these twelve units are added the unity of the triangle itself, so that this Pythagorean figure really conceals the mystical number 13, the sum of 1, 3, 4, and 5. So also the elements of the Pyramid, added to the ONE which is the Pyramid itself, give the number 13.

13 is therefore the numeral symbol of the Sun and twelve signs of the zodiac through which the solar energy manifests. 13, also, is for Qabalists the number of the Self, expressing its One Life through the twelve areas of the human organism corresponding to the twelve signs.

Hence 13 is the number of the spiritual Israel, shadowed by the Biblical account of the physical Israel, which has to do with the manifestation of the life of the patriarch Jacob through his sons, the ancestors of the twelve tribes. Hercules and his twelve labors express the same idea. So do Jesus and his twelve disciples. The perfect manifestation of the idea is symbolized in Revelation by the New Jerusalem, with its twelve gates, its twelve foundations, and its walls, each 12,000 furlongs in length.

On the Great Seal of the United States, which was designed by persons directly influenced by ideas originating in the Qabalah and in the writings of the alchemists, the crest has at its center a pentagram surrounded by twelve others, the thirteen stars being arranged so as to form the macrocosmic star, or hexagram, known also as the Shield of David. This six-pointed star is the mathematical basis for the geometrical



representation of the symbolic Cube of Space, to which are assigned the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the twenty-two Keys of Tarot, as explained in TAROT FUNDAMENTALS. The number 13 is also connected with the cube, because every cube has exactly thirteen axes of symmetry.

In Qabalah the number 13 means Unity and Love, as you have learned in other lessons. It is also the number of a verb meaning "to separate, to remove, to take away," הנה, hawgaw--which means also "to ponder, to imagine." Again, 13 is the number of יבא, yaba, "He shall come." This verb is associated with the noun שילה, Shiloh, which adds up to 345, and refers to the Messiah.

The outcome of the alchemical process gives the alchemist a consciousness of the One-ness of All, from which there follows a development of that genuine love of his fellows which is rooted in his perception of the fact of human brotherhood. At the same time, the alchemical process requires analysis, or separation, and this analysis is an act of the mind. It is the work of alchemical Mercury, an indispensable preliminary to the synthesis which makes possible the manifestation of the New Man, of whom it is said, "He shall come."

Tarot students will remember that the Fool looks upward, toward the corner of the picture corresponding to that which in Keys 10 and 21 is the location of the head of a man, representing the zodiacal sign Aquarius. Since Aquarius is the eleventh sign, it corresponds to the eleventh house of the horoscope, representing friends, hopes and wishes. Furthermore, in some old versions of Tarot, the zero card is named "The Alchemist" to show that the goal of the Great Work is the full perfection of man himself.

Now, just as the ascending hypotenuse of a Pythagorean Triangle, united to the base line at its lowest point, separates itself more and more from that base line until at its upper end it joins the top point of the line which is attributed to Osiris, the Father, so in the alchemical process, though the work begins at the level of the physical universe, and is never disconnected from that firm foundation, the analytical operations remove us farther and farther from the limitations of the physical until, at last, we are united consciously with the generating POINT whence all forms originate.

The numbers representing the degrees of the angles of a Pythagorean Triangle correspond to Hebrew and Greek words connected with the Great Work. The line of three units meets that of four units to form a right angle of 90 degrees, and the number 90 is that of the noun מים, Mem, "water," one of the commonest names for the First Matter. The same word is illustrated by the twelfth Tarot Key, which Eliphas Levi explains as symbolizing the adept bound by his engagements. The number of this Key, 12, is connected with the alchemical process which has twelve stages.

90, furthermore, is the number of Tzaddi, corresponding to the sign Aquarius, which as we have just seen, is connected with the objective of the Great Work, described by Levi as "the full and complete conquest of man's faculties and of his future." This conquest is made possible by mental processes summed up in the symbolism of Key 17, which corresponds to the letter Tzaddi. Even in Christian Gnosticism we have a hint of the same notion, for Irenaeus tells us that 17 is the number of God's people, or spiritual Israel; that is, perfected humanity.



In a Pythagorean Triangle, the line which has four units meets the line of five units to form an angle of 37 degrees. In Hebrew, the number 37 is that of the noun הבל, Abel, the proper name of Adam's second son, understood to be a type of the Messiah to whom the mystical name Shiloh is given elsewhere. The basic meanings of this word are breath and transitoriness. As a common noun, abel is that which echoes through Ecclesiastes as "vanity," where it refers to the embodiment of the Life-Breath in manifest forms. No form is permanent until the final goal of the Great Work, which is indicated by the upper end of the hypotenuse of a Pythagorean Triangle, has been reached at the end of the alchemical process.

In Greek, as Bond and Lea have shown in their studies of numbers in the New Testament, all names and epithets of Jesus are multiples of 37. The Greek for Jesus is 888, and "Jesus Christ," in Greek, is spelled with thirteen letters, having a total count of 2,368, or 37 multiplied by 24. In Hebrew, the number of the letter-name Aleph, אל, is 111, or 37 multiplied by 3; and 37 is also the number of the noun יחיה, Yekhi-dah, designating the Universal SELF located in Kether, from which Sephirah the path of Aleph proceeds.

Finally, where the hypotenuse of five units joins the vertical line of three units, the angle formed contains 53 degrees. We have already seen that this number is important in alchemy. It is that of the noun גן, Gan, "garden," designating the state of Edenic freedom resulting from success in the Great Work. It is also the number of חמה, khammaw, "sun," and the Great Work is known as the Operation of the Sun. Again, 53, as you will remember, is the number of the word אבן, ehben, "Stone." Thus it represents the Philosopher's Stone, or final attainment of the Great Work. אבן was chosen by Qabalists as the technical designation for the supreme alchemical attainment because the word itself is composed of letters in which are conjoined the words אב, Ab, Father, referring to Osiris, and בן, Ben, Son, referring to Horus.

Alchemical truth is truth about the Life-Breath. It is truth learned by experimental work. The basis of this work is analysis, or the separation of earth from fire, of gross appearance from subtle energy. Thus the sages agree that dissolution is the secret of the Great Work, a secret symbolized in Tarot by the Key named Death, which bears the number 13. In our physical and mental analyses we discover, sooner or later, that the power in nature which is astrologically attributed to the sign Scorpio is what "ascends from earth to heaven and descends again to earth, and receives the strength of the superiors and of the inferiors."

This truth is intimated also by the symbols of the first Tarot Key, numbered 0. There we see the Fool, or Alchemist, carrying a phallic wand and wallet over his right shoulder. In the version of this Key issued by B.O.T.A., a white sun in the upper right hand corner of the design occupies the position assigned to the eagle of Scorpio in Keys 10 and 21.

The Scorpio force is the reproductive power, not by any means localized in the physical reproductive organs, as many persons foolishly suppose, but actually present throughout nature, so that "it swims with fishes in the sea, and flies with the birds in the air," as one alchemical writer puts it. This is the force described in a Rosicrucian text as being "set up for the ruin of many and the salvation of some." The same treatise



says; "To the crowd this matter is vile." It is at once the scorpion of death, the serpent of wisdom, and the eagle of aspiration.

The Life-Breath, which is both רוּחַ, Ruach, the pure Spirit, and הַבַּיִת, its transient personalized expression, is not only creative and formative, but is also essentially reproductive. Even on the inorganic plane of physical manifestation we see at work the laws of chemical affinity and gender which are part of the expression of this reproductive power. From these lowest expressions, up to the very highest, the same power is at work. Furthermore, "lowest" is only a relative term. It does not mean "less valuable." It should be understood in the same sense as when we speak of "low" notes in the musical scale. Our first concern is with these lower, or slower, rates of vibration, the foundation of our experimental work.

Verily, the Mother is the Sea  
Wherein swimmeth the Fish,  
And the Fish and the Sea are one.

That One is the All,  
And entereth into all.  
Everything that is,  
Even those things which men account unclean,  
Is an aspect of this All,  
Which is myself.  
And as the Fish is hidden in the waters of the Sea,  
So is the secret of the One  
Shut up within the semblance of the Many.  
Therefore is the Fish a sign of the Secret Wisdom,  
For that Wisdom is naught but the discovery of the One.

(From THE BOOK OF TOKENS by Dr. Paul Foster Case.)



## THE GREAT WORK THE ALCHEMICAL PROCESS(2)

### Lesson Thirty-four

As you glance over your Tarot Keys you will see that stone is an important feature of the symbolism. The Fool stands on a rocky eminence. The Magician grows flowers in a garden where the soil is disintegrated stone. The High Priestess, the Empress, the Emperor and the Hierophant all sit on thrones of stone. In the background of the Lovers, and also in Strength, the alchemical attainment is symbolized, as it is in many an alchemical diagram, by a rocky mountain. This is the height where the brooding figure of the Hermit stands, and to it leads the path shown in Temperance and in the Moon. The Chariot is of stone, and so are the coffins from which rise three human figures in Judgment. Throughout the series of Keys, there is this recurrent suggestion that the Great Work rests on a firm foundation of physical law.

Most of the Keys show the stone as of a gray color. This is the tint associated in color symbolism with Wisdom, the second of the ten Sephiroth. The alchemical work is the confection of the Stone of the Wise. It is the transmutation in our consciousness of the unwise, erroneous conception which is the common opinion concerning the nature of the physical plane. It is the refinement and purification of gross notions concerning the nature of the life-force at work here on earth. "To the crowd it is vile," but the crowd is mistaken, and the alchemical work takes us out of the crowd into the relative isolation of the Great Attainment, pictured by Key 9, the Hermit.

Similarly, we have spoken of the upper point of the Pyramid as being a symbol of the completion of the Great Work, and this point, expressed as a number, is 1, another symbol of isolation. An alchemist does not discover a mysterious something unseen by the crowd. They see it just as surely as he does, for it is by no means invisible. "It is before the eyes of all men, though known to few." The objective of the Great Work is a change in the worker's consciousness. It substitutes for the errors of the crowd's misinterpretations a wise, correct conception of the very same things the crowd misunderstands and misapplies.

The change in the conception effects no essential change in the things themselves. It is we who change, not the "Stone." But as we change, we become able to make manifest, as we direct power released by our knowledge, a command over the forms of the physical plane that seems miraculous to the uninitiated. Forms which never appear in the environment of a tyro are brought into actual physical expression by adepts. Refinements of physical manifestation are possible for an alchemist, and they go far beyond anything attained in an ordinary chemical laboratory.

Thus it is recorded of St. Germain that he had unusual gifts as a painter, and that his canvasses glowed with colors unknown to the palettes of other artists of his day. The same adept is reported to have possessed a secret for perfecting precious stones, so that he was able to remove flaws from diamonds, emeralds and rubies, thus greatly enhancing their value. Whatever we think of the literal truth of these stories, they do indicate a fact. Unusual command of the forms of physical substance is among the powers of an adept who has completed the Great Work.



Such a man sees the physical universe with other eyes, with other brain cells, than the man who is still part of the crowd of the unknowing, ignorant misinterpreters of Mother Nature. He functions by means of a different bodily chemistry. He is, to be sure, still a member of genus homo, but he is truly of a different physical and mental species from the person who looks with aversion upon the physical plane because he regards it as his enemy. The alchemist is of a different species, also, from him who dreams vainly that the physical plane is a non-entity, and takes refuge from reality by asserting that he possesses powers which he cannot possibly exercise.

An alchemist knows that the states of physical existence are real. He knows them as beneficent expressions of a law he is glad to obey, as forms of a power he is free to utilize so long as he does obey. In the "kingdom of stone" he discerns the "marvelous seed of stars," and he effects whatever transmutations and transformations he decides upon --not by claiming omnipotence for himself, but by so adjusting himself that through his organism the One Power which is omnipotence takes form according to mental patterns which he recognizes as being among that One Power's ways of being and doing.

Human recognition of the way the One Power can and does work, is an essential part of the alchemical process. Such recognition is the expression of laws which are as truly in operation in the mineral kingdom as anywhere else. It is not that mind is made to dominate matter. Rather is it that the orderly process by which form is manifested is everywhere at work, and needs to be recognized and followed. Nor is it too much to say that from the point of view of alchemy, human personality may be regarded as being an invention which the Life-Power has brought into manifestation, to the end that through its instrumentality effects may be produced in the world of relative manifestation which could not otherwise come into actual expression.

Obedience to chemical laws is therefore the prerequisite to success in alchemical works. This obedience is briefly summarized by the symbols of the four Tarot suits on the Magician's table. The making of the New Man, of whom it is said, "He shall come," is the real alchemical process, and it begins with right use of physical materials: food (pentacles), air (swords), water (cups), and light (wands). All these are forms of the One Thing. All are physical presentations of the Quintessence, or Spirit. Unless your first experiments be with these materials, of which it is truly said that they are all veils of that First Matter "which all behold but few perceive," do not expect that you will be advanced to the higher grades of alchemical initiation.

Your success depends on your learning to separate the subtle, etherial forms of life-essence from the gross forms in which nature presents them to you. Your own body is the alchemical athanor or furnace. The Stone is designated by the Hebrew noun so that in Tarot it is represented by the Keys named Fool, Magician and Death.

Dissolution is the secret of the work. Superconsciousness, typified by the Fool, is now and ever shall be an inseparable part of your make-up. Depend on it. The intellectual self-consciousness symbolized by the Magician is yours wherewith to discriminate between those forms of physical manifestation which can be utilized for the Great Work and those which are relatively useless. The Imaginative Intelligence symbolized by Key 13 is yours also. By means of it, you may so modify your subconsciousness that every



cell in your body will thrill with the sense of its marvelous reproductive power, until you come to realize that within you is the potency which shall enable you to reproduce within the field of your personal existence the Life-power's inherent command over physical forms.

"Suavely, and with great ingenuity," remember. Not in haste. Not with impatience. Calmly and sweetly, resting secure in the absolute certainty that, even here and now, on the physical plane, your every thought and action rests on the secure foundation of Eternal Being. Approach the Great Work in this spirit, and you shall inevitably attain to its perfection.

From what has been said thus far, it should be evident that the earlier stages of the alchemical work are directed toward a change in the alchemist's own organism. This should provide you with a standard of judgment to protect you against alchemical imposters, who assert that the Philosophers' Stone is a mere physical object which may be made by any person if only he knows the proper ingredients, and how to combine them. He who says this is either self-deceived, or else a wilful imposter. Genuine sages never make this claim. A careless reader of Sendivogius, or Paracelsus, or D'Espagnet, or Flamel might suppose these adepts were speaking of an actual objective stone. Closer examination of their writings dispels this error.

On the other hand, those who, like Ethan Allen Hitchcock, or Mrs. Atwood, maintain that alchemy is aimed only at the regeneration of human consciousness, are also missing the mark. When one is perfect in the alchemical work he can really make the Stone of the Wise, and, by means of it, he can change actual base metals, or even the refuse of the earth, into gold (should there be any good reason for so doing.) By means of the Stone, moreover, a true alchemist is able to prolong the life of man's body far beyond the usual time allotted to our sojourn on this planet.

Perfect mastery of the alchemical process puts the successful artist in a position which enables him, at will, to alter the electronic structure of any portion of the physical universe. The process, nevertheless, has for its primary object the mental and physical transmutation of the alchemist himself. And the one laboratory in which the entire operation is performed is the human body.

The Great Work itself requires certain physical materials. These, as we have said, are light, air, water and food. It is to food that the books refer when they say the materials for the work are inexpensive, so that a sufficient supply may be bought for three florins (about \$1.50), or may even be secured for nothing if the artist is willing to soil his hands.

No book tells just what these materials are. No book can. Not only because the food-stuffs are such commonplace ones that nobody would believe them to be the true materials, but also because for every operator the formula varies. This variation depends basically on his physical condition at the time of beginning the work. It is also determined by his chemical type, by his particular constitution. This is shown in various ways, among others, by the planetary positions and aspects of his natal horoscope.



It is possible and permissible, however, to indicate why and how foodstuffs are the materials. What an alchemist has first of all to establish is a certain chemical balance in his physical body. This involves the supply of due proportions of twelve chemicals. These are: 1. fluoride of lime; 2. phosphate of magnesia; 3. sulphate of potash; 4. phosphate of soda; 5. sulphate of lime; 6. silica; 7. phosphate of lime; 8. sodium chloride; 9. phosphate of iron; 10. phosphate of potash; 11. sulphate of soda; 12. chloride of potash.

None of these materials are properly adapted to the uses of the physical body in their inorganic forms, but if they are taken into the system as organic compounds, in food, they are the precise materials required for the performance of the Great Work. Most of the foods rich in them are found in the vegetable kingdom. This explains the alchemical statement that you can get them for nothing if you are willing to soil your hands. They grow in the earth.

Remember, however, that you will be unable to recognize these materials until you have discovered the First Matter. This discovery is direct, first-hand perception of a fact in nature. The fact in question is that everything is made of fiery, scintillating points of electric energy.

For most persons who study these lessons it may be said that this is no more than theory. For the few scientists who are competent to conduct the difficult laboratory experiments on which is based the modern theory of the electrical constitution of matter, it may be said to be an indirect experience. For an alchemical adept the First Matter is something directly perceived without the mediation of any instrument but the human body.

Thus the discovery follows a change in the alchemist's body, and it is with this change that the first stages of the alchemical process have to do. These we are now considering. The organic changes are brought about by psychological means. The immediate agent is the subconsciousness, since subconsciousness builds the body, maintains its functions, and determines its chemistry. Subconsciousness built your baby body before you were born, and transformed it into the body you are using now. The same subconsciousness, under the direction of alchemical Mercury, the Magician of Tarot, can change your present physical instrument into the kind of body which will enable you to perceive the First Matter.

In the next lesson, the first steps in your practical work will be explained.



# THE GREAT WORK

## THE ALCHEMICAL PROCESS (3)

### Lesson Thirty-five

Subconsciousness works according to mental patterns impressed on it by the conscious mind. Hence the picture of the Fool is important to every would-be alchemist because it is a symbolic pattern of the type of expectancy which stimulates the response of subconsciousness. Whatever pictures frequently occupy your attention act as suggestions also. Thus, even a person ignorant of the meaning of the details of Tarot symbolism will undergo some change of consciousness if he looks at the pictures every day. And not only a change of consciousness, but also a change in the structure and chemistry of his body.

From now on, you will find it advantageous to look, every day, at the complete tableau of the twenty-two Keys, laid out in three rows of seven, from left to right, beginning with Key 1. This is the tableau given in TAROT FUNDAMENTALS, Lesson 2, page 4. Among other things, this tableau contains a summary of the alchemical process. Because it influences subconsciousness directly, it modifies even the physical body through the suggestive effect it has on this deeper level of mental activity.

Every day you should work with the colors and sounds of the seven interior stars, or alchemical metals in the following order: Saturn, blue-violet, A; Sun, orange, D; Mars, red, C; Jupiter, violet, A-sharp; Venus, green, F-sharp; Moon, blue, G-sharp; Mercury, yellow, E. Intone the sounds three times each using the syllable AUM pronounced for this purpose Ah-oom. The intonations need not be loud.

We come now to the consideration of certain facts about the plant world, because conscious knowledge of these facts will strengthen your subconscious recognition that all natural forces are at work according to certain specific numbers and rhythms. It is necessary to have this knowledge, for it is of the sort which is the intellectual basis for the marvels accomplished by alchemists and magicians. It should be apparent to every student of the Tarot that the most important teaching of this symbolic book is that the transforming agency is the self-conscious, intellectual mind, pictured as the Magician. The forces at work are subconscious, but the direction of these activities is from the self-conscious level, and necessitates knowledge of certain laws of number and proportion.

In India, today, several schools of occultists specialize in this phase of knowledge. Examples of their intricate geometrical diagrams called mandalas occasionally find their way into the Western world, but most of them are jealously guarded. Ancient Egypt had the same secret, and it was used in building the pyramids and other sacred structures of that land. The Greeks possessed it also, and their most beautiful statues and buildings embody these rhythmic proportions which pervade nature. Western architecture, especially religious architecture, utilizes the same laws of number and proportion. Recently, through the work of such men as Samuel Coleman and Jay Hambidge, some of these ancient principles have been rediscovered and applied to various forms of design.

Vestiges of the same secret, naturally, are to be found in Freemasonry, some of them attributed to Pythagoras who required knowledge of geometry from all his pupils. Thus it is not surprising that the Great Seal of the United States, designed by men who



had been strongly influenced by Freemasonry, is actually a Hermetic document. For these principles of proportion are incorporated into the design of this symbolic statement of the hopes and aspirations which animated the revolutionists who founded the New World Order.

Ancient and modern Rosicrucian literature is full of diagrams exhibiting these proportions. There are several Rosicrucian books in which almost nothing of value is to be gleaned from the words of the text, which are merely a blind or excuse for publishing the diagrams in which the real significance is to be found. Manly Hall, with fine discrimination has reproduced many of these diagrams in his large *ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF MASONIC AND HERMETIC SYMBOLISM*.

The most important application of these numerals and geometrical proportions is not to lifeless statues, painted counterfeits of life, or buildings of wood and stone. The same laws govern the structure of the human body, the relations of its parts, even its chemistry. When knowledge of these fundamental proportions is impressed on subconsciousness through conscious recognition, this knowledge begins to modify the body-building processes. Certain great rhythms and numbers in nature affect you every moment of your life. By coming to recognize them as part of your make-up, you will subtly change the assimilative, eliminative, and other chemical functions of your body. Understand this well. You do not receive this knowledge simply as information. To gain it is an integral part of the alchemical process itself which is performed, you will remember, by the aid of Mercury, that is, by the aid of self-conscious mental states. To know these numbers and proportions is part of a process which will help adjust your whole life to the harmonies of being.

Among the most primitive forms of plant-life are the diatoms, minute one-celled water plants, of which thousands of species have been classified. In a single drop of fresh or salt water one may find diatoms which show all the characteristic number-rhythms of nature. In *NATURE'S HARMONIC UNITY*, Samuel Coleman gives numerous illustrations which he analyzes, showing that the triangle, the square, the pentagon and pentagram, the hexagon and hexagram, and the octagon are the determining geometrical elements of these tiny plants. He shows also that the angles and lines of these microscopic members of the vegetable kingdom are the precise angles and lines utilized in the planning of the Parthenon, in the construction of the Great Pyramid, and in the composition of innumerable works by the greatest painters and sculptors.

It has been found that in the higher orders of plant life, the buds appear in order, the leaves follow in regular sequence, and flowers are put forth, not only at the appointed season, but at the appointed part of the plant. Not a leaf varies from its proper position, not a bud from its regular order, any more than a planet varies from its orbit. Leaves are arranged spirally round the stem in the same way that planets revolve round the sun.

In the blossoming of a flowering plant, each series or whorl, which is just a complete cycle, is arranged on the principle of alternation. If a flower has five sepals, or parts of the calyx, it has five petals of the corolla, alternating with the sepals. The same flower will have five, ten or twenty stamens, and five, or some multiple of five, in the



pistils. This is the proportion found in all members of the rose family. In a similar way, arrangements of three or its multiples are seen in the flowers of endogens such as palms and lilies. Among flowerless plants, such as mosses, lichens, seaweeds and fungi, the parts of the fructification are in twos and fours or in multiples of these.

Thus the lowest order of plants corresponds to the number 4. The typical number of plants without branches, and with parallel leaf-veins, such as the grasses, the lily and the palm, is 3. The highest class of plants, with two cotyledons, branches, and reticulated leaf-veins, such as the apple, rose, oak, and so on, has 5 for its number type. Therefore the lowest order of plants might be represented by the base of a Pythagorean triangle, or 4. The mediate order, which includes lilies, palms, and all kinds of grain, could be represented by the vertical line of 3. (In this connection, observe that Osiris, the Egyptian deity assigned to this line of the triangle, is a corn-spirit, and note that almost all the plants which are in this classification have in symbolism a distinctly masculine significance.) Finally, the highest orders of the plant-world are numerically related to the line attributed to Horus, that of five units, ascending from Isis, the mother, to its reunion with Osiris, the father.

The numerical arrangements which regulate the scales of every bud, the order of the bracts, and the place of every leaf on every plant have been found to bear a correspondence to the series of numbers: 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, etc., in which any two numbers added together will give the succeeding number of the series.

Botanists classify these different arrangements by using fractions, thus:  $1/2$ ,  $1/3$ ,  $2/5$ ,  $3/8$ ,  $5/13$ ,  $8/21$ ,  $13/34$ ,  $21/55$ , and so on. The same fractions express the law which governs the comparative periods of revolution of the planets of our solar system by pairs. The revolution of Uranus is a close approximation to  $1/2$  that of Neptune. That of Saturn is  $1/3$  that of Uranus. Jupiter's revolution is  $2/5$  of Saturn's. The revolution of the asteroids is  $3/8$  that of Jupiter. Mars revolves in  $5/13$  of the time taken by the asteroids. The same principle gives the fraction  $8/13$  for the earth, the fraction  $13/21$  for Venus, and  $13/34$  for Mercury. One need not be a botanist or an astronomer to grasp the deeper significance of these correlations. They establish beyond question the fact that one changeless law of proportion pervades the universe.

When you have found the First Matter, say the alchemists, the Great Work is "woman's work, and child's play." Careless readers get the impression that the alchemical operation is easy after one discovers the First Matter. True, the work is neither difficult nor expensive. Yet these words of the sages have a more recondite meaning.

The alchemical Woman is what the ancient Egyptians called Isis. She is represented by the base of a Pythagorean triangle. In Tarot, Isis appears eleven times, in Keys 2, 3, 6, 8, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 20 and 21. In six Keys (2, 3, 8, 11, 17 and 21) she is the only human figure in the symbolism.

She is the recorder of the law, the form-giving mother, the tamer of the turbulent forces of the animal kingdom. She is the preserver of balance, the unveiler of truth and the unveiled truth itself, the eternal dancer partly hid by the cyclic forms of cosmic expression. Her vision of the higher levels of being is reflected into our human conscious-



ness as a quiet pool reflects the sun. Long has she been held captive and under a curse so that she must die and be reborn before her powers may find complete expression. Because she has been subject to the Man, she has been brought lower than the animal by the Man's false knowledge. Because of that same lying semblance of knowledge she has been crowned with a false authority not her own, and this must be destroyed before her real powers and real worth may be made manifest. Yet through her, and her activities, release shall come.

I am the Fire of Mind  
Which divideth itself  
Into the Superior and Inferior natures,  
And putteth on a robe of flesh  
To come down.

I am the vital principle of all that is.  
Nothing is that does not live,  
And of that life I am the source.

As it is written:

"First the stone,  
Then the plant,  
Then the animal,  
And then the man."

But before the stone, I am the FIRE,  
Distributed equally in space,  
Nowhere absent, filling all.  
And before the Fire, hidden within it,  
I am the pure KNOWING  
Whence all forms flow forth.

(From THE BOOK OF TOKENS by Dr. Paul Foster Case.)



THE GREAT WORK  
THE ALCHEMICAL PROCESS (4)  
Lesson Thirty-six

The Alchemical Child is what the Egyptians called Horus, represented by the five-unit hypotenuse of a Pythagorean triangle. He is asleep in the mineral kingdom. In the plant world he begins to dream. In the animal kingdom he dreams on, sometimes half awake. In man he wakes and begins to realize the meaning of his life. Yet has he an even higher destiny to fulfil. For the alchemical Child is not merely man. He is Man-God, destined to attain to perfect union with his Father; and in that union the alchemical work will be completed.

In Tarot, this Child is foreshadowed by Key 3, for he it is that the pregnant mother, pictured there, is already forming in the secret depths of her own body. He is promised again by the mountain behind the Lovers, in Key 6. This mountain is a symbol often employed to represent pregnancy, but it indicates also the idea of attainment and the fact that the alchemical attainment is a physical work which is perfected by the integration of the One Force when the latter is turned into earth. The perfect manifestation of the alchemical Child is represented by Key 12, for when the Child is full-grown, he reverses the usual order of things and establishes his perfect mastery through his unwavering obedience to the ALL. In Key 19 you see him exercising his new powers, and in union with his liberated counterpart, the other half of himself, departing from the limitations of sense knowledge and dancing in the fairy ring of the truly magical life. Finally, in Key 20, he rises with his Father and Mother from the limitations of three-dimensional existence to share with them the freedom of the fourth dimension and the immortality of the Perpetual Intelligence.

The alchemical Woman is the One Worker. Through long aeons has she been at her endless labor, spinning, weaving, making the garments of form in which the One Life clothes itself. In her loom the tapestry of manifestation has been woven. She is the keeper of the patterns of all possible forms.

The elements of these patterns are simple. A cross, a triangle, a square, a pentagon, a hexagon and an octagon. These, and the circle, provide all the geometrical patterns for the manifold forms of the physical world.

By the proportions contained in these simple figures all force relations in the universe are determined. When the Cosmic Mother begins her work, nebulae form themselves into solar systems by an interplay of activities measurable by the lines and angles which these figures display. Gravitation, most mysterious of all, operates by a law patterned on these forms. Sound vibration, both in pitch and volume, is determined by the same principles. All the play of light and color follows the same laws of form. Atom mates with atom to build a universe, and wherever anything comes into physical manifestation, these same proportions are to be found.

Throughout it all, the animating impulse is the play of the alchemical Child always potentially one with his eternal Father. His Mother sets the patterns, but his is the life which flows into them and gives form and body to them in the mineral kingdom. In the plant world his life now finds greater freedom of movement, greater variety of form and

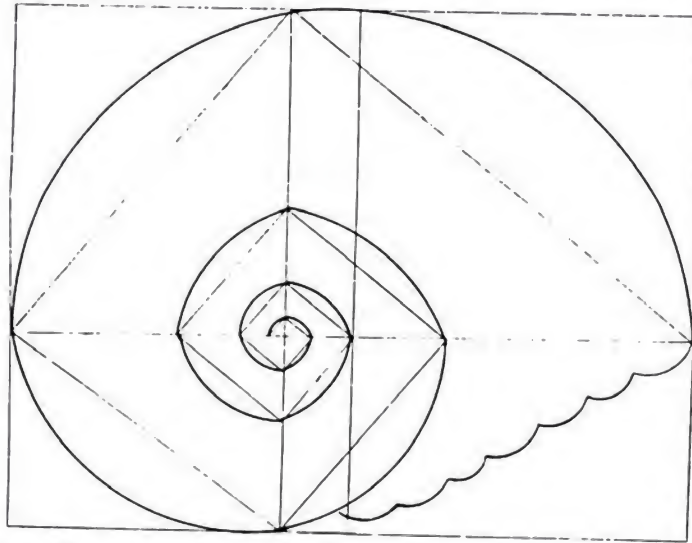


color, and even the beginnings of feeling and sensation.

Then comes the working of that same play of the One Life through the animal kingdom. Always the basic patterns are the same. Wherever your eyes rest on an animal, you are looking at a form which yields to the analyst the fundamental circle, with its two diameters making the equal-armed cross shown on the breast of the High Priestess. All the relations of that form are determined by combinations of the square, the pentagon, and the octagon.

Wherever you look, you will see forms in which the proportions of the figure Jay Hambidge called the Rectangle of the Whirling Square are the determining elements. Here is an example from conchology showing the geometric construction of a large family of sea-shells.

The spirals of this shell are exactly as pictured, and they are the logarithmic spirals which are the basis of all form, since such spirals are developed by the nebulae whence solar systems are evolved.



Throughout the animal kingdom proportions like these are to be found. Bees and wasps build their nests on strict geometric principles. Thus the naturalist, Reaumur, measuring the angles in the cells of a honeycomb, found, after submitting the problem to a geometer who had no clue as to the object Reaumur had in mind, that bees invariably build their houses according to angles which give the greatest strength, involve the use of the least possible expenditure of time.

From the tiny diatom to the lordly lion, and thence up to man, the alchemical Woman works with the same patterns. Wherever there have been wise men, they have seen these patterns and have left records of what they saw, records in books, like the words of alchemists and magicians, and the mysterious diagrams with which they illustrate their writings; records in the pictorial symbolism of Tarot, which have power to initiate and keep going the formative process which carries these patterns into human embodiment, thus changing an ordinary human personality into an adept; records in stone like the pyramids and temples of the world.

Even the proportions of the Tarot pictures themselves are influenced by one of the



basic cosmic patterns. Draw diagonals from corner to corner in the rectangular frame of any of these pictures, including the title in the rectangle. You will find that the diagonals make two equilateral triangles, point to point. The proportions of this rectangular frame are thus shown to be precisely the same as those of the rectangle formed on the Tree of Life by the paths connecting either the second, third, fourth and fifth Sephiroth, or those connecting the fourth, fifth, seventh and eighth Sephiroth. On the Tree of Life the long sides of this rectangle cross the Tree horizontally, and the short sides are vertical, but the proportions are exactly the same.

The Rider Tarot, made under the supervision of A. E. Waite, and the B.O.T.A. version, are, so far as we know, the only printed Tarot Keys in which these proportions are observed, but we do know that the esoteric, hand-drawn versions of Tarot used in certain secret schools invariably enclose each picture in just such a frame.

This is not the place to discuss the intricacies of its occult meaning. We speak of it only to add weight to the other testimonies we have given you concerning the fundamental importance of number and geometry in alchemy and magic. These mathematical principles are those whereby the Life-power manifests itself in physical forms. Since magic and alchemy have for their objects the determination of form, these are the patterns which are the real keys to the alchemical process.

Recognize them at work in the world around you. Find them in the structure of your own body. From this recognition will come, as a result of its influence on subconsciousness, the builder of all forms, an actual reconstruction of your physical vehicles, both gross and subtle. Then in you will the Child be born, the Child whose destiny is union with his Father, the Child who is Master of all things in heaven and on earth.



# THE GREAT WORK

## CALCINATION

### Lesson Thirty-seven

The Great Work is in twelve stages corresponding to the twelve signs of the zodiac. These twelve stages are: Calcination, Congelation, Fixation, Separation, Digestion, Distillation, Sublimation, Putrefaction, Incineration, Fermentation, Dissolution and Multiplication.

This lesson deals with the first of these twelve stages of the Great Work which is Calcination, corresponding to the first sign, Aries. Calcination is defined as the expulsion of the volatile substance from a matter by the action of heat. Through the correspondence of this stage of the Work to the sign Aries, it corresponds also to the letter Heh, first of the twelve simple letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Thus Calcination is connected with the following attributions to the letter Heh:

The Constituting Intelligence; the Tribe of Gad (GD:7); the function of Sight; the direction North-East; Tarot Key 4, the Emperor.

Note that Aries is a fiery sign in which the two fiery, electric bodies, Mars and the Sun, are dominant. In the work of alchemy then, the first stage employs the force a yogi would call Tejas or Agni, the element of fire; and it makes particular use of the currents of energy which originate in the Mars center, just below the navel, and in the Sun center, above and behind the heart.

An old alchemical maxim says that to make gold one must have it. Adepts in the Great Art assure us that the matter which is the subject of the operation is none other than what they call "our gold." It is the radiant energy, invisible to the physical eye, which produces all the manifestations of light on this planet. From this energy all forms are made manifest, for it is their substance. This is the alchemical Sol or Sun, which is exalted or lifted up in the work of calcination. The sublimation requires the action of fire, and the cooperation of Mars, the astrological ruler of Aries. If you remember that Mars is represented by the 16th Key of Tarot, which has particular reference to the Great Work, you will be well on your way to understanding the part Mars plays in calcination. In the symbolism of Key 16 you can see the fire at work on the matter. The falling man and woman represent the expulsion of the volatile substance.

Psychologically, the process of calcination is what drives out from consciousness (the matter) the volatile or changeable elements of emotion, personal bias, erroneous opinion, and so on.

This stage of the work, because it is associated with the direction North-East, is connected with the place in a Masonic lodge where the newly initiated candidate receives his white lambskin apron. The material of the apron is a direct reference to the sign Aries. Its color, white, is a reference to the purification of the matter by calcination. In the Masonic monitors there is also an allusion to the alchemical significance of the apron, since the latter is called "more ancient than the Golden Fleece."

The Golden Fleece is one of many symbols of the Philosophers' Stone. The apron is



said to be more ancient because the process of calcination which the apron represents precedes the culmination of the Great Work in the making of the Stone.

The monitors tell us also that the Masonic use of the apron is to prevent daubing with "untempered mortar." This refers to two passages in the prophecy of Ezekiel, --Ezek. 13:10 to 16, and Ezek. 22:28. Read them in this connection.

The Hebrew word translated "untempered mortar" is tawfale. It is used in Job 6:6 as meaning "unsavory," and has this meaning from its root, which signifies "something slimy, viscous, or unpleasant." The Masonic allusion points the way to the right solution both physically and metaphysically, for the apron is connected with the Mars force. Furthermore, the term tawfale as used in Ezekiel 22:28, is associated with the mental condition of false prophets, who speak lies and see vanity. It is no figure of speech the prophet employs here. He is describing what actually occurs. When the Mars force is uncontrolled and untempered, one cannot help "seeing vanity."

Even physical sight is affected by an impure desire nature. This is hinted in the story of Moses, who died, we are told, at the age of 120 years. "And his eye was not dim, nor was his natural force abated." Purity of mind and body are brought about by the work of calcination. This enables one to see even the physical plane with vision of a better, clearer sort than that of most persons.

Seeing vanity is literally seeing falsehood, or seeing that which is not. Millions of persons today are victims of this kind of false vision. Everything they look upon is colored by their false interpretations, and also by those they have received from the race subconsciousness. It is as if they looked at the world through colored glasses. Some look through dark glasses, some through spectacles of rose tint. Here and there one finds a Knower of Reality, who sees the world as it really is, and rejoices in the vision. Such knowers are few, but they all understand the significance of the lambskin apron, and they have all perfected this first stage of the Great Work.

Calcination, moreover, is associated with the color white because in ordinary chemistry it is the process whereby marble, sea-shells and similar substances are subjected to dry heat, so that they are reduced to calx, or quicklime--a white, dry, burning powder. When this is properly mixed with water, it becomes the lime used for making tempered mortar whereby stones truly cut and shaped are cemented together in building. Similarly, in the alchemical sense, calcination is a purgation of the subconscious resulting in a new consciousness which is like quicklime in its effect on all forms of error. Like the slaked lime produced by the mixture of quicklime and water, this new consciousness makes firm and stable the structure of new and true conceptions which we rear in the place of the tower of falsehood represented by Key 16.

In his COMPOUND OF ALCHEMY, Ripley corrects errors which, even so long ago as his day, had crept into the practice of the Art. Speaking of calcination, he says:

"If, therefore, you intend to make gold or silver by craft of our philosophy, see that you do not take for this purpose either eggs or blood, but gold and silver, which, calcined wisely and not manually, will naturally bring forth a new generation, increasing



their kind as does each thing."

Notice that proper calcination is not performed manually, but wisely, that is, through an operation of consciousness. The reference to eggs and blood is also important. Eggs are seed-forms, and are related to the functions controlled by the Mars center in the body. Blood is pumped through the body by the heart regulated by the Sun center. Certain passages in alchemical books have led some to conclude that the Great Work is a modification of the products of the gonads, and also a direct chemical operation on human blood.

The "bellows-chemists" who were influenced by this erroneous interpretation, sometimes, like the infamous Bluebeard, committed dreadful crimes in endeavors to make the Elixir from human blood. Others worked with eggs, hair, urine and wine-- attempting to accomplish in crude chemical laboratories what requires the use of "our secret vessels." But even those who are on the right track in alchemical interpretation sometimes go astray here. They try to modify the working of the special reproductive functions, and they also make the mistake of attempting to change the composition of the bloodstream by means of drugs or chemicals. Ripley tells us to take gold and silver only, meaning thereby the solar current which controls the heart and the lunar current which predominates in all glandular functions.

The calcination of these two currents is a gradual purgation which, Ripley says, takes a year or more. Here he speaks without the slightest concealment. It does take just about a full year, if one is diligent, to purge subconsciousness of its inherited and acquired false knowledge.

Ripley tells us also: "Let the body be subtly filled with Mercury, rendered subtle." He then tells us to use the proportions of One for the Sun and Two for the Moon. The subtilized Mercury is the consciousness represented in Tarot by the Magician. The body filled by it is the alchemist's own. The numbers One and Two relate to the Sun and Moon in Tarot, as in alchemy; for Key 19 the Sun, bears a number which reduces to 1, and the Key representing the alchemical Moon, the High Priestess, is numbered 2. What Ripley means is that subconsciousness must be purified until it partakes wholly of the esoteric quality symbolized by 2. Similarly the calcined Sun must partake wholly of the quality symbolized by 1. Thus purified, they may be blended, and their consistency is said to be like wax, because it takes every impression.

None of this is allegorical. The alchemist's body is his subject, or thing worked on. The work is not directly on "eggs and blood," but has to do with subtle energies which take form as "eggs and blood." These energies, being purged of their impurities, are then mixed, and the mixture is the regenerated consciousness of the adept. That consciousness is aptly compared to wax, not only because wax is so susceptible to impressions, but also because it is a product of the industry of bees. The regenerated consciousness is not a product of nature. It is a work of art. It is an acquired characteristic resulting from long and assiduous practice. Thus the author of the SOPHIC HYDRO-LITH writes:

"The numerous writers on our most noble Art have never wearied of singing its praises, and inventing for it new and glorious names. Its most precious object they have called



the Philosophers' Stone, or the most ancient, secret, natural, incomprehensible, heavenly, blessed, beatified, and triune universal Stone of the Sages. Their reason for naming it a stone, or likening it to a stone, was this: First, because its original Matter is really a kind of stone, which being hard and solid like a stone, may be pounded, reduced to powder, and resolved into its three elements (which Nature herself has joined together), and then may be re-combined into a solid stone of the fusibility of wax by the skilled hand of the artist adjusting the law of Nature."

The perfection of the Stone, furthermore, is thus indicated by the same writer:

"The substance should instantly melt on red hot iron, like wax."

Now iron is the metal of Mars, and red hot iron indicates the active functioning of the Mars force. The substance becomes instantly fluid when it is brought in contact with such activity. This is an excellent though analogical description of the regenerated and illuminated consciousness in its relation to personal activity, symbolized by red hot iron. When self-consciousness and subconsciousness are perfectly purified and fused, they enter into action with perfect freedom. There is no fixity of form, either conscious or subconscious, to interfere with the free flow of the Life-power. As a modern psychologist might put it, the consciousness of an adept is free from all restrictive fixations.

Because this calcination is related to Key 4 of Tarot, and to mental processes which are summed up in the Qabalistic doctrine concerning the Constituting Intelligence of the 15th path of wisdom, what has been written in our other courses concerning this Key and path should be reviewed in connection with this lesson.

Our next lesson will deal with CONGELATION.



# THE GREAT WORK

## CONGELATION

### Lesson Thirty-eight

The second stage of the Great Work is CONGELATION. In ordinary chemical parlance, this is the act of changing from a fluid to a solid state through cooling, coagulation, or the like. Through its correspondence to Taurus, congelation is related to the Hebrew letter Vav, second of the twelve simple letters. Thus congelation is connected with the following attributions of Vav:

The Triumphant and Eternal Intelligence; the function of hearing; the direction Southeast; the Tribe of Ephraim, אפרים, signifying 'a double fruit'; Tarot Key 5, the Hierophant.

Taurus is an earthy sign, and the nature of earth is said to be cold and dry. In Taurus, Venus is the ruler, and the Moon is exalted. Thus the second stage of the alchemical process employs what a yogi would call Prithivi, the element of earth, and in this stage the alchemist has to do with currents of energy which originate in the throat center (Venus) and in the pituitary body (Moon). Thus the predominant forces in congelation are those represented by Key 3, the Empress, and Key 2, the High Priestess. Observe that Venus, ruler of this second stage of the work, is complementary to Mars, ruler of the first stage, and that the Moon, exalted in this stage, is complementary to the Sun, exalted in the first stage.

Ripley gives a hint of this. In his chapter on congelation he says: "Dame Venus can tell thee the truth of this." Venus rules in congelation because, after the substance has been purified by the fiery process of calcination, and by the exercise of the Constituting Intelligence, the next stage of the work consists in the formation or growth of a new series of images. Calcination breaks down form and is predominantly analytical. Congelation, building up form, is synthetic.

Consider the symbolism of the Empress in connection with this. See how everything in Key 3 suggests fertility, fecundity, and the development of form. Creative imagination is an active principle in alchemical congelation, and creative imagination is the embodiment of clearly conceived desires.

To congeal alchemically is to work out new patterns for the expression of the Life-Power. Remember that these patterns must not be fixations. Hence Ripley says: "Do not congeal into a Stone as hard as glass or crystal, which melts only by fusion, but so that the substance will melt again like wax, without blast." He is warning his readers against crystallization, and the warning needs emphasis. Even after the process of calcination has been completed, there is danger of becoming too fixed. So Ripley continues: "Such congealing belongeth not to our conclusion as will not flow and run to water again." In this connection, observe that in the background of Key 3 the active principle which is essential to all that appears in the picture is symbolized by the flowing stream. It is the flow of the mental substance of subconsciousness which is raised to its highest manifestation in congelation.

From your Tarot studies you have learned that the Hierophant represents intuition. He is the Inner Voice speaking the messages of revelation. He is also the Triumphant



and Eternal Intelligence which makes known to us the principles which enable us to bring into manifestation all good things.

In an old magical manuscript quoted by Eliphas Levi, the power assigned to the knower of the secret meaning of the letter Vav is: "He knows the reason of the past, present and future." Here the word "reason" is to be understood as "cause." What is the cause of time? The eternal flow of the Life-power. Past, present and future are divisions intellect makes when it considers what is really an eternal NOW. In the expression of the Triumphant and Eternal Intelligence through a human mind, that NOW is known. While the experience lasts, personal consciousness takes the impress of the perfect awareness of the Universal Mind. The fact of Eternal Being is then a direct perception, and this Being is known as the cause of the flow of expression we ordinarily interpret in terms of past, present and future.

This union with the Universal Knower is alchemical congelation. It is effected by the functions of three centers in the body. These are: 1. The auditory center in the brain; 2. The Moon center, or pituitary body; 3. The Venus center in the throat. Their combined activity results in a special function of the auditory center. Then one hears the "still small voice." It is the voice that spoke to Elijah, the voice young Samuel heard, the voice Jesus mentioned when he said "As I hear I judge and my judgment is just."

The functioning of these centers is brought about by deliberately adopting the receptive, devotional attitude depicted by the figures who kneel before the Hierophant. Hence Norton says in his ORDINAL OF ALCHEMY: "The science of this Art has never been fully revealed to anyone who has not approved himself worthy by a good and noble life, and who has not shown himself to be deserving of this gracious gift by his love of truth, virtue, and knowledge. From those who are otherwise minded this knowledge must ever remain concealed. Nor can anyone attain to this Art, unless God send a Master to teach him." The Master is what Tarot pictures as the Hierophant.

Remember that another name for the Hierophant is "The Pope." This means not the head of the Roman Church, but that universal Father corresponding to Chokmah (Wisdom) on the Tree of Life. By recognizing the One Life which is above, yet within, every human personality as a limitless source of Wisdom, the Father of all that exists, we come into such relation to it that we are taught from above. This inner instruction is alchemical congelation, which imprints on the regenerated consciousness, as a stylus writes on wax, the hidden secrets of the Great Art.

Imagination is the power which determines this part of the work. One must use it in every conceivable way ingenuity can suggest, in order to make more vivid one's awareness that the Eternal Presence is the actual substance of every form we perceive. This use of imagination, related to Venus, effects a gradual change in our emotional reactions to all experience, and this change modifies the function of the Venus center in the throat. As a result of this change in emotional reaction, a change in the operation of the glands connected with the throat center is effected. Thus eventually there is a change in the chemistry of the alchemist's blood.

But remember that the primary change, upon which the physiological transformation



depends is one having to do with our emotional attitude toward the various forms of the One Life-power which are presented to us in the course of our daily experience. This gradual change in our emotions is the outcome of instruction from the Inner Voice which reveals to us through intuition the essential spiritual quality of all things, and thus releases us from both attachment and repulsion. This release is the change mentioned by Norton when he says the Great Work transforms filthy copper into purest gold. Most of us are dominated by filthy copper--that is, by impure imagination. The Great Work transmutes this into the gold of absolute truth.

Memory, represented in Tarot by the High Priestess, is also called into play in this stage of the alchemical process. We employ memory to recall again and again the truth that All Power is actually present everywhere. We use it also to remind ourselves time and time again that our senses report to us nothing whatsoever but the Eternal Presence of the One Reality. Memory (the Moon) reaches its highest manifestation (exaltation) in intuition (Taurus), because what we are taught by the Inner Voice is what the true Self has always known. That is to say, what we call intuition is really participation in the perfect memory of the One Life-power.

South, in the Hebrew alphabet, is represented by the letter Resh corresponding to Key 19, the Sun, and alchemical gold. East, in the same way, is related to the letter Daleth, Key 3, the Empress, and alchemical copper. Tarot students may therefore gain further insight into the meaning of Key 5 by considering it as a blend of the meanings of Keys 3 and 19. Students of Hermetic practice will note that since Key 5 represents congelation, it must be understood that this stage of the work in relation to South-East represents not only the combination of Venus and the Moon, but also the combination of Venus and the Sun (East and South). Do not be disturbed by the apparent complexity of these terms. The study and practice of the Great Art are not for those lacking in patience. By bringing these ideas together in your mind, their meaning will sooner or later dawn upon you. Success in alchemy is not for those who are in a hurry. Our present course puts the essential knowledge within your mental reach, but you must reach for it by earnest consideration of the details of the text. Think well what are the meanings of the Sun and Venus and understand that these two are blended in the stage of the work called congelation, just as they are blended in South-East, blended in your mind, and blended in your body.

Remember also that all reference to Tarot Keys in these pages is intended to get you to look at the Keys themselves in the various combinations suggested. What you are receiving in this connection has until now been kept within the field of instruction reserved for solemnly obligated students. Do not pass it by. Seekers for light have made long journeys, undergone terrific hardships, expended all their wealth, to learn less than what you receive here. Be careful not to undervalue it because it has come to you so easily.



# THE GREAT WORK

## FIXATION

### Lesson Thirty-Nine

The third stage of the Great Work is FIXATION, assigned to Gemini, and thus to the letter Zain, having the following attributions:

The Disposing Intelligence; the function of smell; the direction East-Above; the Tribe of Ephraim (אֶפְרַיִם, signifying "a double fruit"); Tarot Key 6, the Lovers.

Fixation is the establishment of the due bounds of the three principles: the Mercury of superconsciousness, the Sulphur of self-consciousness, and the Salt of subconsciousness. It is the establishment in the alchemist's mind of a firm, immovable awareness of the true relations and functions of these three. Some interpreters have thought fixation has to do with the fixing of will, but this is not the view of those whose tradition is given in these pages. Fixation is the removal of confusion as to the proper functions of the three alchemical principles. On the practical side of the Great Work it is the establishment of harmonious balance in the operation of the three principles. It is not the fixation of will, but the fixation of a relationship between consciousness and subconsciousness, and between these two and superconsciousness. Key 6 of Tarot is a picture of this fixation when the latter is properly established.

The element of air predominates in fixation, and this element is described as a middle nature between fire, the active element in calcination, and the element of earth, which is active in congelation.

The ruling planet in Gemini, the sign connected with fixation, is Mercury. No planet is exalted in Gemini. This is because fixation is a perfect balance of the three principles in which no one of the three has greater power than either of the others. Fixation is the stability of perfect equilibrium. It is the work of Mercury, the Tarot Magician, representing human self-consciousness.

The situation depicted by Key 6 is the outcome of the initiative of the man pictured in that Key. Self-consciousness is what emancipates subconsciousness and puts the woman in right relation to the angel.

From another point of view, the male figure is the alchemical Man, "our Sun." Then the female figure is to be understood as the alchemical Woman, "our Moon." The angel is then alchemical Mercury. "Our Sun," according to the alchemists, is the pure principle of Sulphur, "our Moon" is identified with Salt, and "our Mercury" is by Aesch Mezareph attributed to Kether, the Crown, which is the seat of Yekhidah, the ONE SELF, from which descends the Holy Influence. That SELF is the angel.

Concentration, represented by Key 1 and the Magician, is essential to fixation. Study Key 1 carefully. Note the positive action there depicted by the Magician's right hand. This symbolizes the establishment of contact between superconsciousness and self-consciousness. Remember that the wand thus uplifted is a symbol of the secret force which is sublimated by the alchemical process. Observe that the Magician fixes his gaze on the garden just as the man in Key 6 looks toward the woman. The woman



and the garden are two symbols for one thing--the subconscious level of the Life-Power's operation.

Nor should it ever be forgotten that the Hebrew noun גן, gan, "garden," is the number 53, which is also the number of אבן, ehben, "stone," and of חמה, khammaw, "sun." In that greatest of Biblical alchemical treatises, THE SONG OF SOLOMON, occurs a passage which links the symbols of the garden and the alchemical Woman. It says:

"A garden inclosed is my sister." (SONG OF SOLOMON, 4:12.) Qabalistic commentary on this passage fills many a page of the various books of Hebrew Wisdom. Here we need only note that the Hebrew for "garden" is equivalent to the word for "stone;" that "inclosed" in Hebrew is Qabalistically equivalent to "Zion," and to "the Eye of Jehovah;" and that "my sister" is equivalent to the letter-name Teth, "serpent." He who can take the hint will see that Zion and the Eye of Jehovah refer to the brain-center which it is the purpose of alchemy to arouse to full activity. The power whereby this is accomplished is the serpent power. The secret of the serpent power is symbolized in Tarot by Key 8, corresponding to the letter Teth, and the dominant figure in Key 8 is the alchemical Woman.

Furthermore, this phrase, "a garden inclosed is my sister," is equivalent by Gematria to a phrase in Job 28:2 which the Authorized Version translates: "Brass is molten out of the stone." But the more correct translation would be: "Copper is molten out of the stone."

Remember that the Hebrew word for copper is closely related to the word for serpent, and bear in mind what has been said in other lessons of this course concerning the alchemical meaning of copper. Notice, also, that this "copper" is melted out of ehben, the Stone. If you can take these hints and develop them, you will be nearer to understanding the alchemical process. What lies behind the veil of concealment here cannot be communicated in so many plain words. But the truth is like the ark of the covenant in the tabernacle of Moses. The ark itself could not be seen, but a hint of its outline was given by the places where the poles of the ark pushed outward against the veil. The ark itself was hidden, but its presence was nevertheless made visible to all who knew the meaning of the little protuberances on the veil.

The truth, of course, is that alchemy has to do with ranges of experience which are in some instances beyond those things men put into words. Hints like those in the preceding paragraphs start up a kind of mental activity which is completed by meditation and intuitive grasp of this or that aspect of truth. Were there any other way to accomplish this result, we should be glad to employ it; but if there be another way, we do not know it, and we do know that meditation on these Qabalisms does produce precisely the effect we have tried to describe. Not on everyone any more than music moves every hearer. He who would be a skilled alchemist and Qabalist must, so to say, have some measure of talent before he begins the work. As the alchemist put it: "To make gold we must have it."

Returning now to fixation, another point to be borne in mind is that the element of air predominant in Gemini is closely related to concentration and to the Disposing Intelligence which results from concentration. Yoga philosophy makes this clear by de-



monstrating the close connection between breathing and concentration. In active concentration, one's breathing becomes slower and more rhythmical. Furthermore, the practice of slow, rhythmical breathing makes concentration easier. Breath control and mind control go together. This is another correspondence between alchemical fixation and the element of air.

The Qabalistic explanation of the Disposing Intelligence says: "It disposes the righteous to faithfulness, and clothes them with the Holy Life-Breath." When the solar and lunar currents of the Life-power are rightly perceived, rightly discriminated, and when their operation is kept in proper order (that is, properly fixed), the personality of the man engaged in this practice is merged with the Life-power itself. This is what is meant by the statement that the Disposing Intelligence clothes the righteous with the Holy Life-Breath. When we are merged with the One, the delusion of separateness is at an end. We know that all personal actions are really performed by the One Identify. United with THAT, we share its consciousness of an eternal NOW, and this is the stage of alchemical fixation.

As we have written elsewhere: "One of the Hindu books declares: 'To those men who practice, and thus always keep the sun and moon in proper order, knowledge of the past and future becomes as easy as if they were in their hand.' And again: 'The moon is checked by the sun, the sun by the moon; he who knows this practice strides in a moment over the three worlds.' What are the three worlds? The worlds of past, present and future. The practical occultist--whether he be called yogi, alchemist, or magician--is enabled to cut the Gordian Knot of Time with the sword of discrimination."

Concerning the sense of smell Norton says, in his ORDINAL OF ALCHEMY: "The sense of smell will furnish you with indications whereby you may recognize the predominant element; and, in conjunction with the indications afforded by color, it will teach you where to look for the principal scent . . . When the qualities of a substance harmonize with your nature, the odor will be pleasant; but if the substance be of a kind that does not sympathize with your nature, you will be disagreeably affected by the odor . . . The sense of smell will also enable you to distinguish between a subtle and a gross substance. You will also have knowledge of an intermediate substance which exhibits the corruption of natural heat, and of the difference between corrupted humor and corrupted substance. But our substance has been highly purified, and is conserved by the mean virtue; wherefore, you must not expect a fetid smell to arise from it, though it putrefies after its own proper kind."

By smell, then, the alchemist carries out the injunction of THE EMERALD TABLET: "Thou shalt separate the earth from the fire, the subtle from the gross." In the Great Work the metaphysical counterparts of the physical senses are brought into play. As used here, "metaphysical," remember, means "beyond the range of the physical plane." Never confuse our use of this term with academic metaphysics, which is a branch of speculative philosophy concerned with reasoning about the nature, character and causes of being and knowing the existence of God, and so on. Neither does our understanding of "metaphysical" agree with the vagaries of the many modern cults which use the term so freely and loosely.



For us, the word has to do with direct experience of rates and characters of vibration in octaves of manifestation beyond the range of the physical senses, and beyond what is revealed by instruments which extend the range of physical sensation. The same centers in the brain which register physical sensations are those which register metaphysical sense impressions. The organs which receive the metaphysical sense stimuli are not the same as those which receive the stimulation of physical vibration, but the brain centers which record and interpret metaphysical sense impressions are the same as those with which we record and interpret experiences which we get from the physical world. Note carefully what we have just said concerning organs. The organs of metaphysical sensation are in one of man's finer vehicles. So are the organs which are directly affected by physical vibrations. Neither set of organs is in the physical body. The latter simply contains the brain and nerve centers which receive the final impress of the activity of the sense organs.

When alchemists speak of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting or touching, they almost always mean the metaphysical senses. This is one reason why their books are so easily misunderstood. Persons who have tested the doctrines of Ageless Wisdom experimentally know that the metaphysical senses are real, and learn how to employ them. Thus we may understand what Norton says as having to do with the metaphysical sense of smell, which is awakened into activity by long practice of mental discrimination.

The direction East-Above, assigned to the letter Zain and Tarot Key 6, is a combination of Above, the direction represented by Beth and Key 1, the Magician, with East, the direction represented by Daleth and Key 3, the Empress. This indicates that in the process of fixation there is a combination of self-conscious and subconscious processes, working through the Mercury and Venus centers in the head and throat. By now, readers of these pages should be sufficiently familiar with the functions of these centers to work out for themselves the meaning of this directional combination and its bearing on this stage of the Great Work.



# THE GREAT WORK

## SEPARATION

### Lesson Forty

The fourth stage of the Great Work is SEPARATION, corresponding to the sign Cancer. Cancer is attributed to the letter Cheth which has other meanings, as follows:

The Intelligence of the House of Influence; the function of Speech; the direction East-Below; the Tribe of Zebulon ("habitation") spelled זבולון; Tarot Key 7, the Chariot.

Separation is the formulation of the end, or objective, toward which the special work of the particular alchemist is directed. It is the establishment of the personal purpose, the formulation of the particular definition. Thus it is connected with speech the function assigned to Cheth. It is the utterance of the alchemist's own Magical Word. This magical word is identical with the "new name," written on a white pebble, mentioned in Revelation 2:17. This white stone is given to "him that overcometh," and this New Testament passage is associated with eating the hidden manna. This last is a correspondence with the sign Cancer which, as ruling the breast and stomach, is predominantly related to nutrition.

The white pebble is a symbol of the Stone of the Sages, and in Key 7 there is a reference to this same Stone because the body of the chariot is a cubical stone. The new name is known to none but him who receives it. It is a new definition marking out a distinct phase of the Life-power's activity. One of the cardinal teachings of the Ageless Wisdom which finds expression in alchemy is that the final victory does by no means result, as some have thought, in the destruction of distinct personal identity. Quite the contrary. It is the establishment of the purified personal consciousness what the Apocalypse describes as "a pillar in the house of God, which shall no more go out." Not absorption into what the old lady described as "one happy mass," but clear-cut realization of specific identity is the objective of the Great Work.

For we must remember that the Life-power has an infinite treasure of possibilities for us to draw upon. The Author of the cosmic drama is the spiritual essence of all His characters, but the characters themselves are sharply and vividly defined. It is not personality we are to escape from. The most highly illuminated sage lives in the illusion of distinct personality just as truly as does the tyro. The sage, however, knows the illusion as illusion, and knows how necessary, useful and beneficent the illusion is.

Does this negate the doctrine of reincarnation? By no means. Reincarnation ceases for the overcomer. He who has attained to the perfection of the Great Work is at the end of the cycles of rebirth. Thenceforth his personality remains as a pillar in the House of God, established forever.

The letter Cheth, meaning a field or fence, is typical of this alchemical separation. For one of the paradoxes of the true definition of personality is that this definition marks clearly the distinction between appearance and essence. Thus Charnock says separation divides each part from the other, the subtle from the gross, the thin from the thick. And he warns his readers that this is not a manual work. He says also that by philosophers,



separation is called definition of the four-fold dispersion of the four elements.

In other words, to know the true significance of personality, one must carefully distinguish essence from appearance, spirit from body, the subtle from the gross, the I AM from its vehicle. In Key 7 we have a clear symbolic presentation of this distinction in the composition of the chariot and its canopy, which emphasizes the definition of the four-fold dispersion of the elements.

Separation, then, as definition, is truly related to occult or magical speech. It is the formulation of a new language in the field of subconsciousness. They who succeed in separating the subtle from the gross do truly speak "with new tongues."

Through its connection with the sign Cancer, alchemical separation falls under the rulership of the Moon (the High Priestess), and brings into its highest manifestation or exaltation Jupiter (the Wheel of Fortune.)

Consider the picture of the High Priestess. Her scroll is the scroll of memory. It is like a palimpsest. What is written on its surface is but the total of the impressions of the personal life. Underneath that record, waiting to be brought into view again, is the cosmic record of the universal life. Without any metaphor whatever, it may be said that there is a universal magical language older than any human tongue. Jung, the analytical psychologist, has come close to recognizing this truth. The efficacy of the Tarot Keys depends on it.

In the main, the universal magical speech is the language of pictorial symbolism. But besides this symbolism, of which subconsciousness is the storehouse, there is a true language heard by those who have opened their metaphysical hearing. This inner language is the true native tongue of every human being, and many advanced initiates have become proficient in it. It is in this language only that the spoken word has truly miraculous power, although there are ways of adapting the secret language to the tongues of men so that certain phrases and words in Hebrew, Latin, Greek, Sanskrit, and even in English, have what a yogi would call mantric power. Every word, in every language, has its own specific rate of vibration, and its own specific geometrical form. Fix this in mind, and you will have a seed-thought which some day will bear rich fruit, if you plant it in your mental garden.

Now, subconsciousness contains the record of the magical language, and the record is written in that part of the human organism we call the Jupiter center, or solar plexus. On the innumerable cells of this great ganglion of the sympathetic nervous system, which is sometimes called the abdominal brain, is written the entire history of the development of organic life. On the subtler etheric center corresponding to the Jupiter center--the chakra the yogis name Manipura, "filled with jewels,"--is written the whole story of the cycles of the Life-power's manifestation.

A digest of the essence of that story is given in the symbols of Key 10, the Wheel of Fortune. If you can read this Key, you have in your possession clues which will lead you step by step to right understanding of the whole creative order. Thus you will come to a true comprehension, and it will be definite and clear. As a result of right definitions in



your own consciousness, your use of words will change. It matters not what language you may speak or write. Your knowledge of the magical language will influence your style, your diction, your choice of phrase and synonym. It cannot be otherwise. Your words will have life. They will be vibrant with hidden power.

Qabalists, speaking of the Intelligence of the House of Influence, say: "Out of the midst of its innermost secrets the arcane flow down, with the hidden meanings which are concealed in their shadow." This phrasing suggests flowing motion, having its origin in an inner source which is also superior. In the temples of the ancient world, the place whence this stream of influence flows down was represented by the Holy of Holies, or Adytum.

The power which flows from it is what alchemists call "our water." In his chapter on separation, Ripley tells us that the water must be distilled until it is clean and thin as water should be. When the distillation is complete, the alchemical water is bright and shining as heaven. Distillation is necessary, because the alchemical water, as it comes to us naturally, is to use Ripley's term, filled with feculent sediment.

The meaning is plain. The water is the stream of consciousness, pictured in Key 7 as a river. It wells up into our field of personal consciousness from subconscious sources. At its first source, the ONE IDENTITY, it is perfectly pure, for it is the ice whereon the Hermit of Key 9 stands. When it has passed into the region of subconsciousness it becomes charged with the sediment of the race-errors, as well as with our own misunderstandings. But distillation is possible. The alchemical water can by this means be restored to its pristine purity. The means thereto are concentration and meditation.

In this connection Ripley has an illuminating phrase. He says: "Thou must oftentimes make separation, dividing the matter into two parts so that you take the simple from the gross until the earth beneath remains of a blue color." Blue is the color of the sky, and it is the color predominant in Key 2. What Ripley means is that in meditation one must separate form (the gross) from spirit (the simple) until one has established in himself the consciousness that what is below (form) is truly identical with what is above (spirit). One must comprehend the truth that the body of the chariot, which appears to be stone, is essentially one with its canopy, the sky. When we succeed in doing this, we emancipate our minds from the hypnotic influence exerted on them by weight, mass, form, and other properties of what is ordinarily understood as "matter." Magical control of appearances is out of the question for a person who remains hypnotized by belief in the dominance and preponderant authority of the various forms of the physical plane. When we can make our earth or ground blue, the eye of the mind sees all things whatsoever as appearances of the one sky-power. Then the work of separation is complete.

This work is connected with the direction East-Below, the combination of East (Key 3, the Empress) and Below (Key 2, the High Priestess). In this work, two centers of body are concerned, the Venus center in the throat, and the Moon center, or pituitary body. There is no direct concentration on these two centers, but the work of separation calls them into activity.

Consider well what the work is, and you will see this must be so. Separation is the making of new definitions. It is the recovery of the magical language. It distills, or



eliminates the sediment of error, from the water of conscious energy. This alchemical water is what appears as everything within the range of human experience, whether the plane of experience be physical or metaphysical.

The work of separation demands stillness of body, and is aimed at silencing the mind. Its technique is described in all books of the wise. The essence of the practice is expressed by the injunction: "Be still, and know that I am God." Bodily stillness is the indispensable preliminary to mental stillness.

Separation, however, is not mere quiescence. To achieve it there must go on, over and over again, what Ripley means by the distillation of the water. This is begun by concentration on some particular fact of experience with the distinct intention of arriving eventually at an unbroken flow of knowledge in that particular object. Thus the process of separation includes that of dissolution, which is the eleventh major stage of the Great Work.

Dissolution is represented in Tarot by Key 17, and you will notice that the number 17 represents the expression of 7 through the agency of 1. In Tarot, this means that Key 17 symbolizes an activity which utilizes concentration (Key 1) as the agency whereby to put into operation what Key 7 represents.

In our Tarot studies we have found that Key 7 has receptivity for one of its basic meanings. This picture develops the idea that human personality is the vehicle of the universal I AM. What an alchemist does in the work of separation is to make what has just been stated his own first hand experience. Ordinary human beings may have some faint intellectual awareness of the significance of the second sentence in this paragraph. An alchemist works hard to make it a clear-cut and definite realization.

Language is one of the chief means to this end. First of all, the practical occultist must use words carefully and accurately. In the most literal sense, he must be a student of words. No stranger to the dictionary can ever become a great practical occultist.

Henceforth, therefore, watch your words. Be sure you say what you mean. Be sure you mean what you say. The Great Work cannot be accomplished by persons who deceive themselves and others by intentional or unintentional misuse of speech.

Remember, this practice is by no means a dodging of the truth about life. Rather is it the substitution of truth in speech for the expression of hasty judgments based on inadequate experience. "Out of the mouth are the issues of life." Hence you will find it advantageous to practice silence until you are skilled in right speech. He who refuses to put anything into words until he knows just what he wants to say confers a blessing on his fellow men. The whole world suffers more than ever, in this age of radio, from that unruly member, the human tongue. Learn to control it if you aspire to be a practical alchemist.



# THE GREAT WORK

## DIGESTION

### Lesson Forty-one

The fifth stage of the Great Work is Digestion. It corresponds to the letter Teth, and has the following attributions:

The sense of taste; the function of digestion; the zodiacal sign Leo; the Tribe of Judah **יהודה**, Yehudah, ("praised, celebrated"); the direction North-Above; Tarot Key 8, Strength; the Intelligence of the Secret of all Spiritual Activities.

Chemically, digestion is the exposure of a substance to the action of a liquid with the aid of heat. By this means the soluble constituents are extracted from the substance. Thus digestion requires two elements, fire and water.

The water is the cosmic mental energy, called water because it flows in streams, has currents, vibrates like waves, has tides, and is like a mirror or reflector.

Alchemical fire is the electric vital force which takes form as solar radiance and heat, the animating principle of all creatures. It is called fire because its action breaks down and consumes the forms through which it becomes manifest.

On the Qabalistic Tree of Life, the letter Teth joins Chesed, to which water is attributed, to Geburah, which is of the fiery quality. Thus the secret of the combination of these two occult elements.

Chesed is known also as the Sphere of Jupiter, or the field of the operation of that aspect of the Life-power which is centered in that part of the sympathetic nervous system known as the solar plexus or Jupiter center. Geburah is called the Sphere of Mars, or the field of the operation of that aspect of the Life-power working through the Mars center.

Thus we may expect to find that in digestion, as understood in alchemy, there is a blending of the forces of the Jupiter and Mars centers. The field of the operation of the Jupiter center is physiologically related to the stomach, which is the seat of the bodily function of digestion. The Mars force has control of the entire muscular structure of the body, and is active also in the brain. It has a special manifestation through the reproductive system, and as the serpent power is what yogis raise, or sublimates.

Now the meaning of Teth is "serpent," and the Intelligence of the Secret has to do with the raising of the serpent power, and its transformation into the white Eagle, as an alchemist would phrase it. Note here that the eagle is the bird of Jupiter, so that the essential nature of the alchemical work is seen to be the transformation of Mars into Jupiter. It is therefore the transformation of that phase of activity represented by Key 16 of Tarot into what is represented by Key 10. What is this, if it be not the transformation of the destructive force which overthrows form into that perfect comprehension of Reality which is also the fulfillment of our desires?

On this point, Ripley, in the Epistle which precedes his COMPOUND OF ALCHEMY, says: "Therefore work only kind with kind, and join all your elements so that they do not



strive. Bear also in mind this point, that you turn passive natures into active. Make living substance of water, fire, air and earth; and of the quadrangle make you a round figure."

The quadrangle, or square, refers to the four elements. These are to be turned into living substance, sometimes called the Quintessence. Now the tower of Key 16 is built on a square base, and the number 16 is the square of 4. But note that 16 is the number of cells in a magic square of Jupiter, so that the number of the Key which refers to Mars is also a number related to Jupiter. Furthermore, 16 is 1 plus 6, or 7, and the sum of the numbers from 0 to 7 is 28, whose digits add to 10, so that here is another mathematical correspondence between 16 and 10. Again, the sum of the numbers from 0 to 16 is 136, and the digits of this add to 10.

Furthermore, 136, the extension of 16, is the number of the name הסמאל  
Kasmael, the Intelligence of Jupiter and of יהפאל Jophiel, the Spirit of Jupiter. All these points will show you that the correspondence between Mars and Jupiter is plainly shown in Tarot and Qabalah.

On the title page of Ashmole's THEATRUM CHEMICUM BRITANNICUM is a symbolic engraving. It shows a star of twenty-two rays with a glory behind it. On the three lower rays sits a toad holding up a lunar crescent. Between the horns of the crescent is a solar disk, which a serpent, head downward, seems to be holding in his mouth. The serpent is coiled in a love-knot, suggesting the outline of a horizontal figure 8, and from the center of the love-knot an eagle rises. From the eagle sixty-five drops of dew descend. A Latin motto beneath reads: "Serpens et Bufo gradiens sub terram, Aquila volans, est nostrum Magisterium." It means: "A serpent and a toad coming up above the earth (literally 'stepping up above,') is our Magistry."

The toad is an animal under the rulership of Saturn, as one may read in Henry Cornelius Agripps. The serpent, twisted in the form described above, is one of the many symbols of the force used in the Great Work. The sublimation of the matter begins at the Saturn center, which is at the base of the spine, and thus corresponds to the position of the toad in this emblem. The twenty-two rays of the star correspond to the twenty-two letters and the twenty-two Tarot Keys. The serpent is the Mars force. The flying eagle is the transmuted serpent, as we see in Keys 10 and 21 of Tarot. The sixty-five drops of dew are the "dew of heaven," and their number, besides representing the word אדני Adnai, "Lord," is the number of היכל haikel, "temple," of גם יחד gam yachad, "together in unity," and of L.V.X., when the three letters are taken as Roman numerals.

In the preface to this book, Ashmole says that by means of the Stone it is possible to discover any person in any part of the world, though ever so secretly hidden. "In a Word," he writes, "it fairely presents to your view even the whole World, wherein to behold, heare, or see your Desire. Nay more, it enables Man to understand the Language of the Creatures, as the Chirping of Birds, Lowing of Beasts, &c. To Convey a Spirit into an Image, which by observing the Influence of the Heavenly Bodies, shall become a true Oracle; and yet this, as E. A. assures you, is not any wayes Necromanticall, or Devilish; but easy, wondrous easy, Naturall and Honest."



Compare this with the descriptions of the powers mentioned in Patanjali's YOGA SUTRAS. What is meant is that he who makes the Stone of the Wise can enter into the consciousness of any phase of nature, and project that consciousness into any part of the world. This state of union with the Universal Mind, which union is represented by the word **יח**, ehben, "Stone," does, as Ashmole says, present the whole world to our view, whereas in our present state of mind we see only in part.

Alchemical digestion, then, is a combination of fire and water which extracts the soluble elements from the matter. It is pictured in Tarot Key 8 as the taming of a lion by a woman, who opens the lion's mouth. The woman, moreover, leads the lion by a chain of roses, fashioned like a horizontal figure 8, and the same figure is shown over her head.

Ashmole tells us, furthermore, that the finest aspect of the Stone, which he terms the Angelical Stone, is so subtle that it can neither be seen, felt, or weighed; but tasted only. And here we note that the sense of taste is represented by the letter Teth and by Key 8. The subtle aspect of the Stone is the "dew of heaven," the nectar mentioned so often by the yogis. This nectar is distilled when the woman tames the lion, or when the serpent is transformed into the eagle. The sense of taste is a metaphysical sense, developed by continual practice.

Alchemical digestion is connected also with the direction North-Above, combining North, represented in Tarot by Key 16, with Above, represented by Key 1. That is to say, the work of alchemical digestion combines the functions of the Mars center (the Tower) with those of the Mercury center (the Magician). Yet the self-consciousness of the Mercury center does not act directly on the Mars force. It must have an agent, or intermediary, and this is the alchemical Woman, pictured in Key 8. The qualities of Mercury, the Man, must be transferred to the Woman. The seed-ideas selected by self-consciousness must be implanted in subconsciousness, through whose agency the sub-human forms of the Life-power are brought under control.

All this is related to the zodiacal sign Leo, which rules the heart, and is therefore connected with circulation. The red lion of Key 8 is sometimes interpreted as meaning sublimated Sulphur, combined with Mercury. This is quite true; but we should also remember that the Lion symbolizes the Sun, or alchemical gold, and that his redness relates him to Mars. The color of the lion is the color of the Magician's outer garment, and it symbolizes strength, activity, courage, and the like--all Martian qualities. Thus in the red lion the forces of Mars and the Sun are shown in combination.

Their union is just what happens at this stage of the alchemical work. The outcome of the process pictured by Key 8 is the blending in the human body of forces which come from the Mars center and the Sun center respectively. The Sun or heart center is the point at which the undifferentiated cosmic radiance enters the field of human personality. The Mars center, just below the navel, is the most active of the lower centers of the serpent power. When the currents from these two centers are combined and directed by the alchemical Woman, as shown in Key 8, the result is the release of certain subtle substances into the blood stream. These provide the energy required for subsequent stages of the work.



As we have written elsewhere: "The outcome of this process is that one sees that his personality is a center of expression for the power which really controls everything. In consequence of this perception, the man who has it sees that there is nothing anywhere to fear. Then, since he has nothing to fear, he sees that he has everything to love. Masters of life are invariably distinguished by their fearlessness, and by their unaffected love for all things and creatures. This is real love, without attachment. 'Love your enemies,' to the adept, is no mere counsel of perfection, no unattainable ideal. It sums up his daily practice of life. He is enemy to none, and neither picks nor chooses the objects of his all-embracing affection.

"Strife is at an end in the presence of such a man. Wild beasts will not harm him, nor one another, while he is near. He has mastered the serpent in his own personality, and no external serpent will ever injure him. It is not that wild animals are cowed by him, as by a lion-tamer. It is because he inspires no fear in them that they offer him no harm. This is literally true, and the same law applies to the metaphorical wild beasts of passion and desire."

Our next lesson will explain the alchemical process of Distillation.

Verily, he who knoweth the secret of that Stone,  
Knoweth also the secret of the Serpent,  
And in him shall be fulfilled the saying:  
    "When Israel was a child,  
    Then I loved him,  
    And called my Son out of Egypt."

And he who knoweth this shall be a Measurer of Mercy,  
And all his works shall be rooted  
    In the strength of my Law.



# THE GREAT WORK

## DISTILLATION

### Lesson Forty-two

The sixth stage of the Great Work is called Distillation. It corresponds to the letter Yod which has the following attributions:

The sense of touch; the function of coition; the Intelligence of Will; the sign Virgo; the Tribe of Naphtali ( נַפְתָּלִי, "my wrestling"); the direction North-Below; Tarot Key 9, the Hermit.

Distillation is the process of separating volatile from less volatile compounds. Metaphysically, it is sometimes interpreted as the release of the soul from the limitations of the body; but this is only a partial explanation of alchemical distillation. Through its connection with the sign Virgo, this stage of the work is related primarily to the element of earth, and as a matter of fact, the distillation is a physiological process which occurs in that part of the human body governed by Virgo.

Virgo presides over the functions of the organs in the abdominal region, particularly those which have to do with the process of assimilation. Assimilation may be called the basis of alchemical distillation. Ripley, it will be remembered, tells the would-be alchemist to make living substance of the four elements, and to make the quadrangular into a round figure. Outside our bodies, the four elements seem to be inert and lifeless. When we take them in the form of food, water, air and light, and incorporate them into our organisms, they become living substance. They are thus changed from the inorganic form, symbolized by the square or quadrangle, into component parts of our interior circulation symbolized by the wheel of Key 10.

In discussing the "Virgin's Milk" in an earlier lesson, we touched on this topic, and showed that the actual substance worked upon in the alchemical operation is, at one stage of its manifestation, the chyle in the small intestine. The separation of the subtle essences from chyle, in the region governed by Virgo, is what we mean by alchemical distillation.

The chyle itself is relatively gross. The essences extracted from it are volatile, moving rapidly from one part of the body to another. The most important of these subtle essences have not been identified by physical science, but they have been known for centuries by yogis in the Orient and alchemists in the Occident. The alchemists call one of these subtle essences aurum potabile, that is, "gold which may be drunk," or "liquid gold."

What they mean is precisely what yogis mean by the solar current of Prana. This subtle essence is released from chyle by the process of assimilation in the small intestine. In ordinary human beings, only a portion of the fluid gold is taken into the circulation. Yet all of us have some of it. If we did not, we could not live.

For this reason, all the alchemical sages agree with Ripley, who writes: "Fowls and fishes bring it to us, every single man has it. It is everywhere, in you, in me, in every time and space."



But an alchemical adept, by distillation, charges his blood stream and his nervous system with a superabundance of this fluid gold. He is enabled to do this because of the fact veiled by the astrological dictum that Virgo is ruled by Mercury, which planet is exalted in this sign. The practical meaning is that the process of assimilation is under the rule of the conscious mind.

Primarily, this rule is exerted in the selection of what we eat and drink, and in the conscious control of breathing. For mark this well: It is the breath which makes assimilation complete. Thus Ripley says: "Be moderate in eating and drinking. Do not soften your belly by drinking immoderately, lest you quench your natural heat too soon." This is something for bellows-blowers to ponder. For if alchemy were performed in an external laboratory, what difference would be made in the outcome of the work by the physical condition of the alchemist?

Eat moderately. Eat what you like, and what agrees with you. Find this out by experiment, by reading sound, scientific explanations of the various food values. Eat foods rich in vitamins, especially those rich in Vitamin D. Do not be a faddist. The mental state of a diet crank forbids his ever succeeding in the Great Work. When you eat, remember that you are selecting raw materials for transmutation into the STONE.

As a general principle, so far as quantity of food goes, the old yogi rule "Eat half of what can be eaten conveniently," holds good. No general rule, however, applies to all persons.

If you are ill, do not attempt yoga practice or alchemy. Study the theory all you like, but attend first to your health. The alchemical work demands strength of body, and normal function, as its beginning. The alchemical state of consciousness is supernormal, and you cannot expect to enjoy supernormal states if you haven't normal ones to begin with. This principle has no exceptions.

Alchemical distillation, however, utilizes the rulership of Mercury for more than the selection of food-stuffs. The conscious mind can, through its control of subconsciousness, bring about tremendous improvement in the work of assimilation. One must know about this before he can do it. Those who are in ignorance of the fundamental facts are in no position to do the work. When one knows, he can make a specific demand upon his subconsciousness that assimilation of the subtle essences shall be increased. This demand should be put in the form of positive affirmations, and if these affirmations are combined with visual imagery, they will be more potent.

Before you sit down to a meal, tell your subconsciousness that you are providing it with materials for alchemical distillation. With your mind's eye see the electrical constitution of all you eat and drink. This is by no means difficult. Once you get the mental conception of the electronic constitution of every kind of physical matter, it will be easy for you to see that you are eating cosmic electricity, drinking it, and breathing it. Think of it as light. Then think of your blood stream and nerves as being charged with radiant energy, or living light.

In the Qabalah, the letter yod, which corresponds to Virgo, is associated with the



Intelligence of Will. This mode of consciousness is "so called because it forms the patterns of all bodies; and by this intelligence, when it is perceived, the pre-existent Wisdom is discovered." Key 9 of Tarot, is a commentary on this. The pre-existent Wisdom is personified as the Hermit. The pattern-forming power is represented by the hexagram in the lantern, and the light streaming from the lantern is the Intelligence of Will.

Will-power and light-power are essentially the same. Furthermore, the universe is One, Dynamic, Living Organism. Then it follows that no part of the universe is unrelated to any other part. The power which forms the patterns of bodies is a power of universal Wisdom, a power of the One Identity. This power presents itself to us in the various forms constituting our environment. The forms delude us, until we are awakened to the true nature of the power itself. The truth is that we are always in the presence of One single Reality, which appears to be many things. The essence of that Reality is the Selfhood of Man. A primary power of that Reality is the ability to shape its own energy into forms--forms physical, and forms metaphysical.

The direction assigned to Yod, and therefore related to distillation, is North-Below. This is a combination of North (Key 16) with Below (Key 2). The centers of the body corresponding are the Mars center just below the navel, and the Moon center, or pituitary body. Psychologically, it is impossible to recognize the One Identity represented by the Hermit until one has broken down the false structures of separateness and united the personal field of consciousness in some measure with the universal subconsciousness typified by the High Priestess. Note that North and Below are represented by Keys in the Tarot tableau which stand in relation to Key 9. Key 16 is beneath Key 9, and Key 2 is above Key 9, in the vertical row corresponding to the second stage of spiritual unfoldment. Thus it may be added that alchemical distillation is the agency whereby the principle represented by the High Priestess is made manifest in the activity pictured by Key 16.



# THE GREAT WORK

## SUBLIMATION

### Lesson Forty-three

The seventh stage of the Great Work is Sublimation. It corresponds to the zodiacal sign Libra. Therefore it is connected with the Hebrew letter Lamed, and these attributions:

The Faithful Intelligence; the function of Work or Action; the direction of North-West; the Tribe of Asher (אשׁר); Tarot Key 11, Justice.

In chemistry, the strict definition of sublimation is the conversion of a solid by heat into vapor which, on cooling, becomes solid again without assuming a liquid form. In modern psychology, the same term is used to denote diversion of undesirable natural trends or impulses, by education or conscious effort, into some more desirable type of behavior or activity.

The alchemical term closely approximates the general sense of the modern psychological use, though retaining something of the chemical significance. Included in the alchemical meaning is also something of the now obsolete sense--"to elevate, to exalt."

In THE BOOK OF FORMATION we read: "The twenty-second path is called the Faithful Intelligence, because by it the powers of the Life-Breath are caused to multiply, and all dwellers on earth are merely under its shadow."

To be under the shadow of the Faithful Intelligence is to be bound by Karma, to be enslaved by the series of causes and effects. Yet when the text says "all dwellers on earth" are in this situation, it does not mean what the words convey to the casual reader. There are two kinds of people in this world. By far the greater number do "dwell on earth." Their consciousness is limited to physical conditions, their judgment is based on physical sensation, their expectations are determined by past experiences. On the other hand, in every generation there have been a few, and in this age their number increases rapidly, who know that they live in "heaven" as well as on the earth. These few realize that the I AM at the heart of human personality is the Controlling Center of the world of causes, and not one of the phenomena of the world of effects.

They have absolute faith in the perfect law, and that faith is the Faithful Intelligence we are explaining. Today the knowledge is general that the various activities of nature are expressions of law. Most persons understand that even what seem to be accidents are really links in a chain of cause and effect. The marvels of this age of invention are based on scientific recognition of the reign of law. Yet thousands fail to perceive the truth that the same reign of law governs the transformations of the Life-Breath within the field of human personality. Not the slightest film of fancy is without its definite cause. Not the least permanent of our modes of consciousness but has its place in the series of transformations constituting our inner mental life.

When some people hear this doctrine that the inner life of man is as much an expression of law as are the changing states in his environment, their first reaction is a terrified feeling that they are mere puppets in the grip of forces wholly beyond their control.



Occult science assures us that there are no grounds for this fear. Every activity of personality is certainly a mathematical consequence of pre-existing causes; but in man there is something higher than personality, something above the series of causes and effects. This is the I AM, the Controlling Center mentioned in an earlier paragraph.

The purpose of practical occultism is to teach the student how to become consciously aware of his identity with this One Law-Maker. Thus he is released from the vicious circle of cause and consequence which the Orientals call Karma.

Yet even this release is a matter of law. The consciousness of the released adept cannot find expression through the organism of an unripe personality. The "green apples" on the Tree of Life are ripened by a process which is included in the reign of law. Even when this maturing process is hastened by occult practice, laws must be known and obeyed.

The faith of the occultist, then, is primarily faith in law. To build it up, the perception of the working of cause and effect in the inner life of man must be established, and it can be established by practice only. It takes just as much practice to think an unfamiliar thought as it does to perform an unfamiliar action.

Thinking, indeed, is really just as truly bodily action as any other kind of work. The special kind of thinking which alchemists call sublimation is actual physical labor, even if it does begin in our minds. This practice is facilitated by looking at Key 11, because the symbols of that design have been so arranged that they impress upon the subconsciousness of the observer certain seed-ideas which ultimately develop into active faith. You may have little faith now, but you will build faith by using Key 11.

Thus you will come to realize that your life is by no means that of a puppet. You will know, because you will have identified yourself with the Controlling Cause, that inner essence of perfect freedom. You will then realize that for you the reign of law is no chain, binding you to the working out, on the "eye for an eye" principle, of all your past mistakes.

Do not misunderstand us. The "eye for an eye" manifestation of the law is the one which is operative in the lives of the greater number of human beings. Nor does any one escape from it by merely asserting that he is not affected by its operation. Neither may any one find release from it by leaning on some supposedly higher personality. We have to pay every jot and tittle of our cosmic debts. Nothing is forgiven, for the law is perfect. But the "eye for an eye" principle is not the highest expression of the law. Though we do have to pay our debts to the uttermost farthing, we may pay in another way, by bringing to bear a higher aspect of the law.

Just as men, chained to earth for milleniums by the law of gravitation now fly faster and farther than any bird by utilizing another aspect of the same law, so does the occultist pay his Karmic debts in a more valuable kind of cosmic currency. For his work gives him access to that treasure of treasures which enables him to strike the balance without pain.

This is what is accomplished by alchemical sublimation, which exalts Saturn, the alchemical lead, by the aid of Venus. For Venus is the ruler of Libra, and Saturn is



exalted in Libra. The element involved in the work is the element of air, and this without symbol or metaphor. Breath control is essential to the work of sublimation.

This breath control must not be confused with any of the dangerous practices which have been widely advocated. It is simply balanced, rhythmic breathing: a full, deep breath followed by a period of retention, and then a slow, complete exhalation. Count four for inhalation, four for retention, and four for exhalation, when you begin your practice. After a while you may increase the count gradually until you can make it ten, at the same tempo, for each part of a complete breath cycle. Go slow, and be sure not to subject yourself to strain. Watch the breathing as you do this practice, to see that it is easy, regular and noiseless. Do not practice over ten minutes at a time, and not more than three times daily. The best times are on rising, at noon, and at sunset. If it is difficult to observe the sunset hour, make your third practice on retiring.

Key 11 gives us a strong hint that sublimation includes elimination. This is also suggested by the fact that Libra governs the kidneys, organs of elimination which maintain the chemical balance of the blood. The hint in the picture is the uplifted sword in the woman's right hand.

The psychological part of the process of sublimation consists in eliminating from our mental picture of future activity every detail we do not wish to see realized. This requires discrimination and imagination. It also requires definition, a phase of limitation, and limitation is the quality associated with Saturn. Thus you will notice that the hilt of the sword is shaped like a T, and this letter corresponds to Saturn, because it is the Roman character derived from the Hebrew letter Tav, to which Saturn is attributed.

This elimination is by no means a purely negative process. It demands concentration on mental images (ruled by Venus) of the desired forms of manifestation. Thus in the mental work of sublimation we select a desirable form of personal activity as our goal, and then cut out everything which does not contribute in some way to that objective.

We cut away the weeds of doubt, of fear, of indecision, by engaging in types of action which nourish courage, confidence and decision. Active imagery and clear verbal statement of the conditions one seeks to bring into manifestation will eventually divert the energy formerly expressed in negative imagery and negative statement into these more desirable positive channels.

We eliminate whatever wastes power. Hence we cut out useless discussion of our hopes and aims with persons who are not actually interested. We avoid argument and controversial topics, because we know argument never settles any controversy. We avoid whatever diverts us from the path leading to our goal.

Does this mean we have no amusements, no relaxation? Does it mean we must always have our work on our minds? Certainly not. As Eliphas Levi says: "The way to see is not to be always looking." We must choose amusements which really refresh us. While we are engaged in them, moreover, we must wield the sword lustily, to cut off thoughts of work or business which interfere with perfect rest and relaxation.

All this may seem somewhat remote from ordinary conceptions of the alchemical



process. The contrary is the truth. Such practical details as we give in the preceding paragraphs are by no means the whole of alchemical sublimation, but they are an indispensable part, and they come first.

This work actually converts solids in the blood stream into a vapor through the functioning of the brain cells involved in the work. Then the vapor condenses itself again as a solid--as the solid conditions of external circumstance. Here, in a phrase, is what really occurs. It is by no means "common" sense. It is nevertheless actual truth. One of the functions of the human brain is to make matrices for external conditions. The matrices are mental images. The energy expressed in creative imagination is real energy, derived from subtle, but relatively solid, substances in the blood stream. That energy is projected when we think creatively, and ultimately it condenses, and is precipitated or solidified into actual physical forms which correspond to the mental images. Adepts can precipitate their mental images with great speed, and the results appear to be miracles. Beginners do not get results so quickly, but as they gain skill, the work can be done more rapidly.

I AM the goad of action,  
Which impelleth and directeth  
The great Ox of the Breath of Life.

I am the power of equilibration  
Which holdeth Ruach in balance  
Between formation and destruction,  
As a driver with his goad  
Keepeth his ox from straying off the highway.  
Yet is this directive power inherent in Ruach itself,  
For I myself am that great Breath of Life.

And because that Great Breath existeth before all else,  
I am the Leader,  
The Chief,  
And the Judge  
Of all creatures.  
The wise find me thus concealed in LAMED.

(From the BOOK OF TOKENS by Dr. Paul Foster Case)



# THE GREAT WORK

## PUTREFACTION

### Lesson Forty-four

The eighth stage of the Great Work is Putrefaction. It corresponds to the letter Nun, which has the following attributions:

The zodiacal sign Scorpio; the Tribe of Dan (17: 54); the function of locomotion; the direction South-West; the Imaginative Intelligence; Tarot Key 13, Death.

Putrefaction is decomposition, the disintegration of a body into its elementary parts. Ripley tells us that without putrefaction no seed may multiply. He says also: "It must be done only by continual action of moist heat in the body, not manually." And in his chapter on putrefaction there is a long description of the false alchemists, "who work after their fantasy, in many subjects in which there be gay tinctures, both white and red, divided manually to sight." It would seem that no person acquainted with Ripley, and with his remarks on this point, would be of the opinion that the Great Work is an external chemical process. Yet in very recent times the claim has been made that the Great Work has been accomplished by persons who performed the operation in an ordinary physical laboratory.

Now, heat is always associated with the Mars force, and the particular "moist heat" which is operative in the work of putrefaction is the moist heat of the watery sign Scorpio. This is most important to the whole alchemical undertaking. Ripley says: "Unless your Matter putrefies, it may in no wise be truly altered, nor may your elements be divided kindly."

What is indicated here is the disintegration of that which is the real matter of the alchemical operation, that is, the alchemist's own personality. Primarily, the disintegration or putrefaction must be internal. This is what Eliphas Levi means when he says that a person who knows how to direct the currents of the Astral Light "might throw the world into confusion." The world he speaks of is the microcosm, and its face cannot possibly be transformed until it is first reduced to its elemental chaos.

In Key 16, as we have seen before, we have a picture of the destruction of the microcosmic world. For when the Mars force is turned in a new direction by the alchemical process, it breaks down the conception of personality which is held by the greater number of human beings. (Here the truly wise should pause for meditation until they see clearly what does actually constitute the root of the sense of personal identity in the minds of most men. When this is perceived, the importance of the Mars force in putrefaction will be evident.) When the Mars force is redirected it utterly disintegrates our former structure of false opinions, and this disintegration is the alchemical putrefaction.

This is the inner meaning of what Jesus taught his disciples: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it."

Self-denial does not mean the act of depriving oneself of something one enjoys, like an article of diet, or an amusement. It means the total repudiation of one's ignorant interpretation of selfhood. It is a reversal of the former point of view, and in the alchemi-



cal connection, this reversal is pictured by Tarot Key 12, corresponding to the element of water. Thus Ripley's "moist heat" is seen to be the combination of the forces represented by Keys 16 and 12, and this combination brings about the stabilizing of a new idea of the meaning of human personality.

The Greek verb translated "take up," in the foregoing quotation, means also "to keep the mind in suspense." It is a technical mystery term, as is the word "cross." In the Gospel according to St. Luke there is an additional hint, for there we read that one must take up his cross daily. The cross is what is pictured in Key 12 as the gallows, and in the Hebrew alphabet it is the letter Tav, attributed to Saturn. To take up the cross is to raise the energy concentrated in the Saturn center, and this is done by utter repudiation of personal origination for any state of consciousness, any act of the body, for any word uttered, for any condition of external circumstance.

Ripley says this part of the work takes ninety nights. 90 is the number of the letter-name מ'ם, Mem, associated with Key 12, and is also the number of the letter Tzaddi, which represents meditation. Ripley says also that the result of putrefaction is a powder black as a crow's bill, and that one must come in by the gate of blackness if one seeks to win the paradise of whiteness. This reference to blackness is an exact description of the result of the work of putrefaction. When one meditates and denies himself, disintegrating the false structure of ideas based on the notion that any human activity originates in personality, the outcome is a perception that all things, all actions, all thoughts, all words, are expressions of ONE THING which appears to intellect as No-Thing, or utter darkness. This apparent darkness is really the Limitless Light, hence Boehme calls it Radiant Darkness. That Light, when manifested, is corpuscular. It is composed of innumerable tiny points. Hence the work of putrefaction is said to result in the production of a black powder.

This work of putrefaction connected with the Imaginative Intelligence, pictured in the putrefactive process, is the nerve force which is specialized in the Mars center below the navel. Mastery of the currents of this force is gained by mental imagery; but the images have nothing to do with the sex function. All magic is accomplished by the mind's power of generating mental images. The mental imagery required to deny the old conception of selfhood and reduce it to the chaos of the Radiant Darkness, is properly represented by the number 13, because that number is the value of the Hebrew noun אֶחָד, achad, "unity."

Self-denial is the loss of the old life in order that the new life may be found. It is the death of the old man so that the new man may be born. Note that in Key 13 the reaper is a skeleton, and in astrology Saturn rules the skeleton. The active principle in putrefaction is the Saturn force, corresponding to the letter Tav and the cross.

But have we not just said that the Mars force is active in this work? Yes, but the Mars force cannot be lifted up unless it be stirred into activity by an impulse originating in the Saturn center at the base of the spine. When the coiled-up Kundalini, as the yogis call it, is released by right concentration and meditation, it rises upward and in its ascent impels the Mars force upward also. Mars cannot become active unless stirred into action by Saturn. Thus in Key 13 a skeleton symbolizing Saturn is the reaper, but the



scythe, which does the actual reaping, has a blade of steel, a metal attributed to Mars. The handle of the scythe, which gives the impetus necessary to make the blade cut, is shaped like a letter T, or Tav, the letter of Saturn.

The letter Nun is properly assigned to the direction South-West. South corresponds to the letter Resh, the Sun, and Key 19. West corresponds to the letter Kaph, Jupiter, and Key 10. The bodily centers involved are the Sun center at the heart and the Jupiter center at the solar plexus.

In putrefaction these centers are indirectly affected by the work of self-denial and by "taking up the cross daily." Psychologically, also, the work of alchemical putrefaction involves a combination of the ideas which are symbolized by Keys 19 and 10. When the old false conception of personality is repudiated, the new and true one symbolized by Key 19 is automatically developed as a consequence. This new conception is an elaboration of the idea typified by Key 10, which idea may be put into the following words:

Any particular event is really a manifestation of the cyclic transformation or rotation of the One Thing through various phases of its self-expression. Every event is like a point on the circumference of a circle, or like a point on the rim of a turning wheel. It is continuous with all preceding events, and continuous with all events which follow it. Nowhere is there any break in the continuity of the Life-power's self-manifestation. As the FAMA FRATERNITATIS puts it, "Nowhere a vacuum." The conception of empty space is a fallacy, a misinterpretation of appearances. All space is full of the presence of the ONE THING. Hence, since every particular event is continuous with all other events, such an event as the performance of a given action by a human body, whether the action be one which involves the limbs, such as walking or doing some manual work, or whether it be such action as goes on within the organism, such as the process of digestion, or the brain's activity in thinking, is really a particular expression of the power of the ONE THING at that specific time and place.

Clear perception that this is true destroys all sense of personal separateness. Hence the lightning-flash of Key 16 and the turning wheel of Key 10 are two symbols for one reality, and a third symbol for the same thing is the skeleton reaper of Key 13. Note that the numbers of these three Keys are related. The sum of the numbers from 0 to 10 is 55, and by theosophical reduction the final digit or least number of 55 is 1. The sum of the numbers from 0 to 13 is 91, and this also reduces finally to 1. The sum of the numbers from 0 to 19 is 136, and this also reduces to 1. For all numbers in the series 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, etc., are aspects of the number 1, so that the Tarot Keys bearing these numbers represent a single reality under various aspects.

The clue to them all is afforded by the Key numbered 1, the Magician. It stands for the Intelligence of Transparency--for the idea that all personal activity is the result of the operation of a superconscious Life-power which works through the functioning of a conscious instrument, whence its activity passes into the subconscious level. From the latter it ascends again to the superconscious, returning on its upward journey through self-consciousness again.

Putrefaction is therefore the loss of a false interpretation of life, and this loss is absolutely necessary in order that the true interpretation may be found. What is lost is



worthless, is a counterfeit, is the cause of all our miseries. By utterly destroying this error, the truth becomes evident. We exchange our limited, and really non-existent, personal powers for the limitless, and truly existent, Life-power of the ONE IDENTITY.

All the while, remember, the power at work in all our thought, speech and action has been the one Life-power. We do not change the reality in the least by our change of consciousness. We do not make anything so which was not so before. We simply are brought to the point where we know the truth of the matter, and the truth makes us free.

Because of this, Ripley speaks of putrefaction as being "the rotting of the gold." Gold, as we have seen elsewhere, is in spiritual alchemy a symbol of absolute truth. Furthermore, though alchemists declare that the First Matter is Water and call it by all manner of names, they also agree that the thing the alchemist must work upon is gold, or their Sun, which is pictured in Key 19.

Thus it follows that the substance which is reduced to black powder by putrefaction is none other than gold. Physically this is true as well as metaphysically, for what the alchemist works upon is the material of his own flesh-and-blood body, together with its finer etheric and astral counterparts.

When the alchemist begins to develop in his consciousness the idea that personality is but a transparent vehicle of the One Reality, he actually changes the chemical and molecular structure of his physical body. In the last analysis, the physical body is made out of the radiant energy of the physical sun, because it has been demonstrated that the basis of all physical matter is this radiant energy.

Even when we are mistaken about personality so that our errors result in a poisoned and pain-wracked physical body, the substance of that body is nevertheless the alchemical gold, or universal radiant energy. The pain, misery and limitation we experience are due to the forms or appearances taken by this universal radiance under the influence of mental imagery. When the images are changed, the forms change also, and health, joy and freedom take the place of weakness, suffering and bondage.

Yes, it is as simple as that. Simple to say, and relatively easy to grasp intellectually. Harder to do, at first, though practice makes it easier and easier, until it becomes second nature. The whole work of putrefaction may be summed up in Jesus' admonition: "Let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

Every day this work must be done. Every day the "cross" of the Saturn force must be lifted up. Every day, until the process becomes automatic, so that no trace of the former interpretation dims the transparency of the regenerated self-consciousness, one must deny the appearance of separate personal origination for any activity whatsoever.

Here, in brief, is the practical method of Patanjali, of Buddha, of Jesus, of all the Masters of Compassion. They who go this way reach the same high goal which was attained by the Great Companions whose names have come down to us as the Illuminators, Regenerators, and Saviors of humanity. This was their Way, whereby they set themselves free from illusion. It is a hard way, at first, this Way of alchemical putrefaction, this Way of utter self-denial. Yet must it become your Way if you would share the freedom and joy of these Great Ones who have traversed it before you.



# THE GREAT WORK

## INCINERATION

### Lesson Forty-five

The ninth stage of the Great Work is Incineration. To incinerate is to consume by fire, and the alchemical process of incineration is accomplished by what the Bible calls "a refiner's fire." This stage of the work is connected also with the element of fire through the fiery sign Sagittarius. Through Sagittarius it is connected also with the letter Samekh, which has these attributions:

Sagittarius; the Tribe of Benjamin (יִשָּׁכָן: 162, "son of the right hand"); the direction West-Above; the mental state of zeal or wrath; the Intelligence of Probation or Trial; Tarot Key 14, Temperance.

Careful study of Key 14 is requisite to proper understanding of incineration. Remember also that incineration follows putrefaction. Putrefaction is negative. It is the denial of the false origination of personal activity. Incineration goes further and affirms the true origination of everything which is accomplished through the agency of personality.

Incineration burns to ashes the dross and refuse of the old ways of thinking. It consumes all the residue of our erroneous interpretations of experience. This residue remains in subconsciousness even after putrefaction is complete. That is to say, even when we consciously attribute all action to the One Reality and deny the personal origination of anything whatever, latent tendencies remain which must be purged out.

We ourselves cannot purge them out because self-consciousness cannot penetrate into the depths of subconsciousness. Hence the work of putrefaction must precede that of incineration because in the process of incineration something has to be brought to bear which cannot be done by the alchemist himself. A higher power has to be invoked. This is one reason that all sages are agreed that they owe their success in the Great Work to the Grace of God.

In the work of incineration, a higher power takes the place of the alchemist. Recognition of this higher power is given in the Rosicrucian vow connected with Key 14: "I will look upon every circumstance of my life as a particular dealing of God with my soul." By "soul" we are to understand the whole psychic nature of man.

In magical texts this stage of incineration is sometimes called "the knowledge and conversation of the Holy Guardian Angel." Thus in the various versions of Key 14, the angel is always shown as performing the alchemical work. Sometimes the angel is pictured as a winged woman pouring water from cup to cup. Sometimes the central figure of this Key has the attributes of Diana, and stands before a moon-shaped cauldron of silver, from which the smoke of incense rises, while she pours from a torch in her right hand drops of flame upon an eagle, and from a cornucopia in her left hand directs a stream of water toward the head of a lion. In our version, taken from one of the oldest esoteric designs, the sex of the angel appears to be male, and he wears a solar disk on his forehead. Hence the vase of water is in his right hand, and the torch in his left; but as in other designs, the water falls on a lion and the fire on an eagle.

The Intelligence of Probation or Trial, assigned to Samekh, is said to be the first test



by which the Creator tries the devout. The devout are those who are wholly devoted to realizing their identity with the One Reality. The technical Qabalistic term is Chasidim, (חסידים), "merciful or beneficent ones." Chasidim are persons who partake of the quality of Jupiter, persons whose consciousness is akin to the nature of the fourth Sephirah, Chesed, the Sphere of Jupiter.

Jupiter rules Sagittarius, and this indicates that the influence dominant in the work of incineration exerts itself through the Jupiter center in man's body. This center, the Manipura ("filled with jewels") Chakra of the yogis, is the solar plexus. It is the great subconscious reservoir of impressions, and the process of incineration clears the reservoir of all the refuse of our former erroneous interpretations of experience. The result is that one's consciousness becomes more and more identified with the cosmic cycles of the Life-power's activity, represented in Tarot by Key 10, corresponding to Jupiter.

Wrath or Zeal is the mental state attributed to Samekh. The root meaning of the Hebrew noun so translated is "agitation, trembling," and thus the fundamental significance is closely connected with vibration.

This word is זנונ, in which the first letter represents the Sun, the second corresponds to the earthy sign Taurus, the third is attributed to the Moon, and the last is assigned to Gemini, the Twins, ruled by Mercury. Often the word is spelled זנן, when it is a Qabalistic formula for Sun (ך), Moon (נ) and Mercury as ruler of Gemini (ז). Thus here is an intimation of something which utilizes the solar and lunar currents in combination with those of Mercury.

On its very surface the idea of zeal or wrath is closely connected with what yogis call Rajas, the desire nature. This is akin to the thumos of Platonic philosophy, and is symbolized in the BOOK OF REVELATION by the red dragon. A similar symbol is given in the alchemical BOOK OF LAMBSPRING:

A savage dragon lives in the forest,  
Most venomous he is, yet lacking nothing:  
When he sees the rays of the Sun and its bright fire,  
He scatters abroad his poison,  
And flies upward so fiercely  
That no living creature can stand before him,  
Nor is even the Basilisk equal to him.  
He who hath skill to slay him wisely,  
Hath escaped from all dangers.  
Yet all venom, and colors, are multiplied  
In the hour of his death.  
His venom becomes the Great Medicine.  
He quickly consumes his venom,  
For he devours his poisonous tail.  
And this is performed on his own Body,  
From which flows forth glorious Balm,  
With all its miraculous virtues.  
Hereat all the Sages do loudly rejoice.



The illustration accompanying this description of the dragon shows him biting his tail, so that his body forms itself into the very shape of the letter Samekh. The forest, of course, is the familiar symbol, repeated so often in Hermetic works. It denotes the alchemist's own body.

Incineration, therefore, is the purging and refinement of the desire nature, which, when it is thoroughly cleansed and purified, having passed through the death of its old forms, becomes the Great Medicine. Our own personal consciousness, as we have said, is inadequate for the performance of this part of the work. Yet the work itself proceeds from the level of self-consciousness into the subconscious field where the actual incineration occurs.

This is indicated by the direction West-Above, assigned to Samekh. West relates to Jupiter and thus to the solar plexus, and what Tarot symbolizes by Key 10. Above relates to Mercury, and thus to the upper brain and the pineal gland, and what Tarot symbolized by Key 1. The point to be remembered is that the Magician does nothing but watch. The power which flows downward through him is what accomplishes the incineration, and this power is the angel of Key 14.

In Key 1, the Great Medicine is represented by the roses and lilies in the garden. These symbolize the purified generative activity of subconsciousness, for flowers are the reproductive organs of the vegetable kingdom. The roses represent the red stage of the alchemical work, which relates to gold, and the lilies represent the white work, or alchemical silver.

Roses represent also the number 5, and the petal scheme of lilies is based on the number 6. In the Magician's garden are five roses, so that their total number indicates  $5 \times 5$ , or 25; and there are four lilies, indicating the number 24, or  $4 \times 6$ . The sum of 25 and 24 is 49, which refers to the forty-nine fires of the yoga and alchemical teaching. Forty-nine is also the square of seven, and relates to the magic square of Venus, composed of forty-nine cells, numbered from 1 to 49, in such a way that the constant summation of all horizontal, vertical and diagonal rows is 175, which is the number of Kadmael (קדמאל), the Spirit of Venus. The total value of the numbers in a magic square of Venus is the sum of the numbers from 1 to 49, or theosophical extension of 49, which is 1225. 1225 is the number of Authiga De-Authiqin. (אֶתִּיקָא דֵּאֶתִּיקִין), "The Ancient of the Ancient Ones," a title of Kether, the Crown. (Note that Kether is represented by the crown above the end of the path pictured in Key 14.)

All these technical details refer to the garden of the Magician. This as we have seen in our Tarot studies is what is also represented by Key 3 the Empress, and symbolizes the generative activity of subconsciousness. This generative activity is related to the occult meaning of the letter Daleth, which has for one of its meanings the womb, or matrix.

The alchemical point here is that both gold and silver are brought forth from the womb of alchemical copper. Hence Norton says, in his ORDINAL: "It is a divine labor and work to change vile copper into the finest silver and gold." Observe that it is a divine work. And in his NEW CHEMICAL LIGHT, Sendivogius writes: "As a woman is gene-



rated in the same womb, and out of the same seed as a man, and the only difference is in the degree of digestion, and the purity of the blood and salts, so silver is produced from the same seed, and in the same womb as gold." Alchemically speaking, this womb is copper, or Venus, corresponding to Tarot Kether.

Psychologically, then, incineration is the process which consumes the dross of erroneous thinking. It rids subconsciousness of what Oriental sages call Samskaras, the subtle residue of the thoughts, feelings and actions of former lives. Putrefaction reduces the Matter to blackness, and then incineration gradually changes it from black to white, and later, from white to red.

This figurative language refers to the reduction of the sense of separate personality to absolute nothingness or blackness. Following this, incineration first substitutes for the sense of personal origination of thought and action the idea that whatever goes on in the field of personal expression is really the reflection of the One Reality. This is the white stage of the work, or alchemical silver. It is followed by the red stage, in which the various events in the field of personal experience are found to be not only reflections of the One Identity, but also direct operations of that One Identity itself. Plainer than this we do not know how to write.

Observe the order of the stages: Black, white, red; and note that in Key 1, the Magician wears his red mantle over his white robe, so that he puts on the white garment first, and after it the red one.

Above all, remember these words from THE GLORY OF THE WORLD: "For it is Nature alone that accomplishes the various processes of our Art, and a right understanding of Nature will furnish you with eyes to perceive the secrets thereof." Alchemical incineration is the process which establishes this knowledge firmly in the alchemist's consciousness. Whether we represent Nature, as more commonly, and as in some old Tarot Keys, by a feminine figure, or whether as in our version of Key 14, by a figure which seems to be male, One Reality is meant. The great lesson is that we do not really perform any part of the work ourselves. Our personal activities are simply transformations of the One Energy. In the recesses of our bodies are the "secret vessels." Thus the book we have just quoted says in another place:

"When God had created the world, and adorned it with all manner of green things, herbs, roots, leaves, flowers, grass, and also with animals and minerals, he blessed them, and appointed that everything should bring forth fruit and seed after its kind. Only Adam (who is our Matter) was not yet in a position to produce any fruit out of himself. Before he could propagate his species, it was necessary that a part of him should be taken away, and again joined to him, i.e., his wife Eve. Hereunto we must understand that so long as our substance is still gross and undivided, it can produce no fruit. It must first be divided, the subtle from the gross, or the water from the earth. The water is Eve, or the spirit; the earth Adam, or the body."

Here our author uses the term "spirit" to designate the moving principle, whereas we are more accustomed to employ the same word for a yet higher principle, and would say Eve is the soul, or psychic nature. Otherwise what he writes is just what has been



said throughout this course, and in the various lessons on Tarot.

Perhaps the most important thing in this quotation is the direct and unequivocal statement that Adam is "our Matter." Here we may understand the word Adam in its generic sense as representing the broadest meaning of the word "Man."

In Tarot, Adam is the Magician, and Eve is the High Priestess. Eve is the inner consciousness which may be so directed that it becomes the pure mirror of universal Spirit. Adam is the self-consciousness, founded on the experiences we receive through bodily sensation.

Note that Key 14 belongs to the series 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20. These Tarot Keys symbolize powers which are predominantly subconscious, and in all but one of these seven Keys, in the ancient esoteric Tarot, the central figure is feminine. The exception is the Hierophant, Key 5; but even he wears feminine garments because the super-conscious instruction of intuition is clothed in images provided by subconsciousness, and subconsciousness is the channel through which we receive instruction from above.



# THE GREAT WORK

## FERMENTATION

### Lesson Forty-six

The tenth stage of the Great Work is Fermentation. To ferment, in the older sense of the word, is to leaven. We know now that fermentation is decomposition produced in an organic substance by living organisms. That this was known to the ancients may be open to question, yet it is certain the secret schools have always understood the process of fermentation to be analogous to something higher.

Thus Jesus compared the kingdom of heaven to leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened. This parable is a perfect summary of the tenth stage of the Great Work.

Through its connection with the sign Capricorn, fermentation corresponds to the letter Ayin, which has these attributions:

Capricorn; the Tribe of Issachar (יִזְחָר, 830, "he will bring a reward"); the Renewing Intelligence; the mental state of Mirth; the direction West-Below; Tarot Key 15, the Devil.

The letter-name Ayin means "the eye, as the organ of sight;" but the word signifies also "the visible part of an object, the surface, the appearance." Even in ordinary Hebrew usage, therefore, Ayin is associated with the phenomenal as opposed to the real, with what is given in sensation or impression as opposed to what is subject to rational verification. The eye is the natural symbol of the external appearances which conceal Reality. It is the sign of man's finite experience of "things as they seem," as opposed to things as they really are. Through the function of the eye we become aware of the phantasmagoria of the world of phenomena, which Shakespeare called "this insubstantial pageant."

The natural, untrained eye is a great deceiver. Hence in Tarot the letter named "eye" is represented by Key 15, whose title, "The Devil" means "The Slanderer." Dia-bolos, the Greek original of "devil," means by its derivation "He who throws across," that is to say, one who throws obstacles in the way of another's progress. Just as a slanderer's aim is to blacken the reputation of the person he lies about, and hinder him in the execution of his plans, so that which is personified in Tarot as the Devil is what tells man falsehoods about his nature, what deceives man concerning his rightful place in the universal order.

This being so, it may seem difficult to understand why Key 15 represents the Renewing Intelligence, which is said to be so called "because by it the Holy God renews all that is begun afresh in the creation of the world." What connection can there be between the false appearance of things and the consciousness which makes all things new? The answer to this question brings us close to the inner secrets of Ageless Wisdom.

The sages declare that the world of appearances is not, in itself, a world of deception. Our delusions arise from our tendency to take things at their face value. The world of appearances attracts our attention. However much we may misunderstand it,



it excites our interest, piques our curiosity. We wonder about it. We endeavor to solve its puzzles. Wherever we look there is something to challenge us, some riddle to read, some mystery to unravel.

For normally constituted minds, wonder is the beginning of growth, and what most excites our wonder is the discovery that things are by no means what they seem. This discovery is the seed of science, the leaven which transforms our consciousness. Hence it is written: "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov. 1:7). To the untrained eye, to the undisciplined mind, the marvels of the world strike terror; but in every generation there are a few persons whom wonder prods into investigating something which simply scares most of their contemporaries. Hence what we fear is what really instructs us, and sets our feet on the path leading to liberation. On this account, Ageless Wisdom says: "The Devil is God, as He is misunderstood by the wicked;" and Eliphas Levi affirms that the devil of exoteric dogmatism is really the First Matter of the Great Work.

It is easy to see why this doctrine has always been hidden carefully by a veil of words and symbols. Even today, numbers of persons who can read, "The Devil is God, as He is misunderstood by the wicked," might have qualms about accepting the bold, unqualified statement, "The Devil is God."

Yet the sacred books of all religions are filled with hints to the same effect. Theological hocus pocus has artfully turned the attention of church-goers away from these hard sayings, but they abound, even in the Bible. Thus, in the 45th chapter of Isaiah, Jehovah is made to say: "I create evil." The third chapter of Amos is equally explicit: "Shall there be evil in a city, and Jehovah hath not done it?" In both these instances, the word translated "evil" means just what it says, including all manner of moral evil and wickedness.

Similarly, the Book of Job calls Satan one of the Sons of God, a technical name for a certain order of angels. Critics of the Bible have collected many instances of the same sort which show beyond question that God is regarded by the writers of many books included in the sacred volume, as being the author of the ills which beset us as well as the source of the experiences we call "good."

The solution of the difficulty is in the statement: "With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the perverse thou wilt show thyself perverse." This occurs twice, in exactly the same words, in 2 Samuel 22:27, and in Psalm 18:26. The Life-Power presents Itself to us as we conceive It. The human conception of a Prince of Darkness is only an ignorant misunderstanding of the working of the Power of Light. Paradoxically, there is nothing whatever like the malignant demon pictured in Key 15, yet it is true also that this hideous monster represents an Eternal Reality.

It is in those manifestations of the Life-power which ignorance ascribes to a malicious personal enemy of mankind that sages find the true power of renewal. It is in the apparent exceptions to the formulated laws of nature that the wise find clues to higher laws. It is in puzzles and paradoxes, difficulties and problems, that Those Who Know find cause for rejoicing and mirth. Hence, in all messages which have been received from those who are regarded as Masters of the Wisdom, we find the idea reiterated that



they have great problems to which they have, as yet, found no answers.

"We have solved the problems which seem so difficult to you," they tell us. "We know the Way which leads to freedom from bondage to circumstances, from sickness, from the dread of death, from the semblance of poverty or other forms of inadequate supply. Yet we also have problems, only we know how to go about solving them because we possess the Universal Solvent. You also possess it, or the materials from which it may be made by alchemical art. Let us show you how to make the STONE, and then you may join the mirthful company of Great Companions who laugh at fear, and dissolve the terrors of the Unknown with a smile."

Remember that in Jesus' parable a woman took the leaven. Up to this tenth stage of the alchemical process you have been preparing the leaven. Now the Woman (subconsciousness) must take it and mix it with the seemingly chaotic, lawless mass of sense experience symbolized by the Devil.

Consequently, we find that fermentation is connected with the direction West-Below. West corresponds to the solar plexus, or Jupiter center. Below corresponds to the Moon center, the pituitary body, symbolized in Tarot by the High Priestess. The Tarot Key numbered 12 is the summary of the Keys corresponding to these two directions, for West is assigned to Key 10 and Below to Key 2. Thus fermentation is represented by the Hanged Man, as well as by the Devil. That is to say, when the leaven of superconsciousness has been received, through the suspension of personal identification with events and actions which occur through, rather than by, the personal vehicle (Hanged Man), this leaven begins to operate subconsciously.

Returning to the sign Capricorn, we find that throughout the world this is the sign of the zodiac associated with the birth of World-Saviors. For it is in Capricorn that the Sun, in northern latitudes, begins to move northward and awaken from its seeming death. In Capricorn also, the planet Mars is exalted. Mars rules Aries, associated through the letter Heh with sight, and Scorpio, associated with sex and with alchemical putrefaction. In Qabalah, Mars is connected with the Exciting or Active Intelligence.

As a figure of speech, fermentation signifies agitation, excitement, so that when one is "all in a ferment" he is stirred up to a high pitch of emotional activity. Alchemical fermentation is just that, and in it the Matter bubbles and boils with the energy which is transforming it from the chaotic state of putrefaction into that which the sages call "our Medicine."

Saturn rules Capricorn, and this should show you that the active center in this part of the work is the center at the base of the spine. Its energy is combined in fermentation with the force of the Mars center.

In Key 15 the alchemical Man and Woman are pictured in chains, and they have horns and hoofs. At this stage of the Great Work, the animal nature is intensified, and at no other point in the alchemical operation is it so evident that the lower elements of personality are of like nature with the beasts. Yet the chaining is necessary, and partakes of the limiting nature of Saturn, ruler of Capricorn. The same idea is thus expressed by Ripley: "Fix Water and Earth together, and when the Medicine flows like wax,



then throw it upon amalgams. And when all this is mixed together, seal your Glass tightly, and make a fire above it, and so continue until all be fixed."

The "amalgams" are mixtures of appearances, seemingly unrelated, of which the composite picture of the Devil is a type. The Water is the Woman. The Earth is the Man. The Glass must be sealed tightly, or Hermetically sealed. This last refers to the field of observation wherein the work is carried on. The Glass is analogous to the table of the Magician, shown in Key 1. In one sense, it is the field of attention, but is really more than merely this, in practical work. It is the "One Vessel" into which the alchemist puts the materials on which he works, and into which he looks, to watch the progress of the operation.

Truly, it is a Magic Glass, and we doubt if readers of these pages will fail to identify it correctly when we say that the sages recommend that it be oval in shape, and fashioned to resist fire. Who can write more plainly than this? As Sendivogius says: "Let me therefore admonish the gentle reader that my meaning is to be apprehended not so much from the outer husk of my words, as from the inward spirit of Nature."

The entire doctrine of alchemical fermentation, then, is summarized by Key 15 of Tarot. Study that picture carefully, and if you have access to the inward spirit of Nature, you will solve the mystery of fermentation. Our words will serve to put you on the right track, and that far more explicitly than the writings of the earlier adepts.

THUS saith He who formulateth in darkness:  
     I am Lord, not of light alone,  
     But of darkness also,  
 For I the One am all-pervading.

This is a hard saying and a stumbling block to many,  
 Yet ye must consider it well  
 And ponder it in your hearts.

(From the BOOK OF TOKENS by Dr. Paul Foster Case.)



# THE GREAT WORK

## DISSOLUTION

### Lesson Forty-seven

The eleventh stage of the Great Work is Dissolution or Solution. Solution is the process whereby two or more substances are combined to form a single homogeneous mixture, usually a liquid, sometimes a solid. This is the meaning of solution in ordinary chemistry, and it has a bearing on the alchemical significance of the term, as has the mathematical definition of Solution: "The act or method of determining the answer to a problem."

Dissolution corresponds to the zodiacal sign Aquarius, and so to the letter Tzaddi which has the following attributions:

Aquarius; the Tribe of Manasseh (מנשה, 395: "causing to forget"); the Natural Intelligence; the act of meditation; the direction South-Above; Key 17, the Star.

Says Ripley: "We dissolve into water which does not wet the hand." He declares also that solution is the cause of congelation. Now, to congeal is to freeze, or to render solid by the lowering of temperature. All solids are congealed fluids. Thus Walter Russell, who has a considerable measure of insight into the true nature of alchemy, writes:

"Man's dependable realities are but the 'ices' of substances. And so are all things which man knows and sees and feels and stands upon and builds upon, and upon which he relies as true and staunch and real and everlasting. All are but as ice, and, at their respective melting points, as reliable as ice. If this planet did not know a temperature above that which keeps ice solid, man's concept of ice would have as much stability as his concept of granite . . .

"All solids have their several melting points or points of liquefaction. All solids are liquefied gases and frozen liquids which have their varying liquefaction and freezing points. Freezing points are points of crystallization and vary with the complexity of the elements. All frozen solids can be liquefied by cold, and solidified by greater cold. . . Man's concept of solids is born out of his experiences at the degree of temperature to which he is daily accustomed. . . Man's concept of gold is that of a solid for man is accustomed to seeing gold at a temperature below its point of crystallization. Man's concept of mercury is that of a liquid, because man is accustomed to seeing it above its point of crystallization." THE UNIVERSAL ONE, pp. 60, 61.

Alchemical solution is the cause of alchemical congelation since it is the process which reduces all solid bodies in man's experience into their elemental "water." This process is that of meditation, which enables one who is proficient in it to change his consciousness of any solid into direct metaphysical awareness of that solid's essential spiritual substance, the alchemical water or First Matter. Solution therefore enables an alchemist to perceive the true fluidic substance of the forms reported to him by his physical senses. When this substance is perceived directly, as a consequence of meditation, the alchemist learns that it is a substance which may be molded by mental imagery. Then, if the mold or matrix be kept intact, that is, if the mental image remains unbroken, the invisible fluidic substance can be "cooled" until it becomes an actual physical object in the personal environment of the alchemist. This cooling is the congelation



which is caused by alchemical dissolution.

Great adepts in this work are able to alter the forms of solids, so that they actually transmute metals by means of the "Stone." Lesser adepts work by the same principle, although the changes they effect in their surroundings by the power of mental imagery are less rapid, and seem often to come about by "natural means." Ability to transform and transmute objects of the physical plane by forming matrices of mental imagery varies among the adepts. The earlier stages of this work are those whereby the alchemist alters his own body. Having done this, he progresses to control of the forms of the animal kingdom. Then he exerts a similar control over the vegetable kingdom. Last of all comes the mineral work, represented by the mountain in the background of Tarot Keys 17, 8 and 6.

Meditation is the basis of alchemical solution, and meditation begins at the self-conscious level of human mentality, with the act of concentration on some particular object. Any object will do, for the inner essence of all things is identical. Patanjali, whose YOGA APHORISMS should be studied in this connection, defines meditation as "an unbroken flow of knowledge in a particular object." He gives specific directions for progress from simple concentration, step by step, to the "seedless Samadhi." Study his instruction if you would gain a clear understanding of the technique of alchemical solution.

One point is made very clear by the symbolism of Tarot Key 17. Meditation is a Cosmic process. When we meditate we simply enter into a stream of activity which is always flowing. The whole technique of meditation is intended to disabuse the mind of the practitioner of the idea that he meditates. The main thing is to eliminate personality. It is not we who meditate. As Key 17 intimates, we do not unveil Nature's secrets. It is Nature herself who reveals her mysteries to us.

Talbot Mundy has a story in which he describes an airship whose motive power is the electric and magnetic currents of the earth. The apparatus consists simply in a mechanism which brings the ship into the sweep of these currents, as a cable-car is set in motion when its mechanism grips the cable. Meditation is like that. Meditation practice simply sweeps us into the stream of the cosmic meditation.

Thus Key 17 is related to the direction South-Above because it symbolizes a process which begins in the field of Mercury, or the Magician (Above). Hence the symbolism of Key 17 includes an ibis, the bird of Hermes, shown perched on a tree behind the kneeling woman. The result of the work of meditation is the mental state depicted in Key 19, which corresponds to the direction South. Note that South-Above combines Mercury (Above) with the Sun (South), so that two interior stars are indicated--the Mercury center in the upper brain, and the Sun center near the heart. Success in meditation does actually establish a current of subtle energy which flows between these two centers.

Aquarius, the sign corresponding to alchemical solution, is represented in Tarot not only by Key 17, but also by the head of a man, shown on Keys 20 and 21. It is toward this corner of the design that the Fool looks, and in some old versions of Tarot the Fool is named "The Alchemist." Meditation reveals to man the secret of his own essential nature, and reveals also the truth that this essential nature is the inmost essence of all



things. Man himself is the object of all occult study, and man himself is the First Matter of the Philosophers' Stone. Through alchemical solution, then, we find not only the inner essence of the object meditated upon, discovering it to be the "water which will not wet the hand," but we learn also the absolute identity of this "water" with the essence of our own being.

Ripley says: "Here I will disclose to you a secret which is the ground of all our secrets; and if you do not know it, you shall lose all your labor and expense, both great and small. Take heed, therefore, that you do not fall into error. The more earth you have, and the less water, the better your solution. Consider how ice is turned into water, as it must, because it was water before. Just so our earth is transformed into water, and water is congealed by earth. For all the sages tell us that every metal was once mineral water, and thus they turn all to water with water."

The alchemical water is the fluid substance we call mind-stuff. It is the water of life. It is the astral fluid. It is the living, conscious, electro-magnetic energy which is the true substance of all things. Its currents flow through our brains, and meditation, or alchemical solution, is simply the right direction of those currents. Or, as has been said before, it is an entrance into the cosmic flux and reflux of those currents. Hence all the alchemists agree that the Great Work cannot be understood or performed unless the alchemist find a Master. Who is the Master? Tarot represents him as the Hierophant and the Hermit. Need we say more?

Meditation reduces the appearances of the outer world to their inner essence. Thus it agrees with the chemical definition of solution given on page 1. Meditation is said, therefore, to be the means whereby we overcome the influence of the pairs of opposites. Our senses report to us a heterogeneous collection of separate objects. Meditation makes us perceive that every single thing is not only related to all other things, but that every single thing is also made of the same stuff from which other forms are built up. This, remember, is not conviction nor belief. It is direct metaphysical perception, because meditation opens the inner sensorium. The practice of meditation transforms theory into experience, and when one has had the experience, his whole interpretation of Nature is transformed. Nature unveils herself to him, and when she does, he learns, so that he never forgets, that never for one single instant is Nature his adversary. Thus meditation transforms the appearance of Nature from the grisly terror of Key 15, and from the cataclysmic disaster of Key 16, into the peaceful, beneficent Mother of us all, pictured in Key 17. This is the transmutation of copper into gold, in the spiritual sense, for the kneeling woman of Key 17 is the same as the Empress of Key 3, and she is also the woman who tames the red lion in Key 8. She is the heavenly Venus, or Isis-Urania.

Alchemical dissolution or solution then, is primarily a psychological process. It lifts up the energy stored in the reservoirs of subconsciousness into the field of conscious awareness. It unfolds the metaphysical sensorium, and gives us direct experience of the inner and true nature of all things. It also effects changes in the physical and subtle bodies of the alchemist so that his personality becomes a better vehicle of expression for the Life power. These changes are the inevitable consequences of meditation, or alchemical solution, and they lead to the final stage of the Great Work.



# THE GREAT WORK

## MULTIPLICATION

### Lesson Forty-eight

The last stage of the Great Work is Multiplication, and through its association with the zodiacal sign Pisces, multiplication is linked with the occult meanings of the letter Qoph, which are:

Pisces; the Tribe of Reuben (רֵאוּבֵן, 259; "see, a son"); the Corporeal Intelligence; the function of Sleep; the direction South-Below; Tarot Key 18, the Moon.

Multiplication is the act or process of increasing in number or quantity. It is the process whereby the alchemist who has succeeded in solution, and in the other stages of the Great Work, augments his Elixir. Hence Ripley compares multiplication to fire from which many other fires may be kindled.

The idea behind multiplication is the idea in the parable of the leaven. Hence Ripley tells us that multiplication is accomplished by repeated, or iterated, fermentation. He compares it to the action of saffron, which, when it is pulverized, tinges a large quantity of fluid with its yellow color. He says also:

"Keep your fire morning and night so that you do not need to run from house to house to borrow fire from your neighbors. The better you tend the fire, the more good you will win, multiplying more and more continually within your Glass, by feeding it with Mercury as long as you live. Then you will have more than you need to spend."

The fire is, of course, the alchemical fire of the regenerated consciousness. To run from house to house may possibly be a reference to reincarnation, but what Ripley says here has to do also with the inner enthusiasm which requires no outward stimulus. The Glass in which the Elixir is multiplied is the "One Vessel" of the alchemist, the oval glass which has been mentioned earlier in these lessons. The Mercury with which the Elixir is fed is self-conscious attention, alert awareness of all the details of daily experience.

Multiplication, in brief, is the tingeing of the whole body with the consciousness which is first experienced when the Stone is actually made within the pineal gland. Hence it is associated with the Corporeal Intelligence.

Corporeal Intelligence, say the Qabalists, is so called because "it forms every body which is formed in all the worlds, and the reproduction of them." This statement applies to the four worlds of the Qabalistic (which is also the alchemical) philosophy. It implies that there is a body, or vehicle, appropriate to every world.

The Corporeal Intelligence builds a body suitable to the Life-power's expression in any environment. It builds the bodies of all the four kingdoms whose activity constitutes the life of this planet. The same consciousness builds bodies (archetypal, mental, astral and physical) everywhere else in the universe. Thus Judge Troward writes:

"Manifestation is the growth proceeding from the Principle, that is to say, some Form in which the Principle becomes active. At the same time we must recollect that,



though a form is necessary for manifestation, the form is not essential, for the same Principle may manifest through various forms, just as electricity may work either through a lamp or a tram-car without in any way changing its inherent nature. In this way we are brought to the conclusion that the Life-principle must always provide itself with a body in which to function, though it does not follow that this body must always be of the same chemical constitution as the one we now possess. We might well imagine some distant planet where the chemical combinations with which we are familiar on earth did not obtain; but if the essential Life-principle of any individual were transported thither, then by the Law of the Creative Process it would proceed to clothe itself with a material body drawn from the atmosphere and substance of that planet; and the personality thus produced would be quite at home there, for all his surroundings would be perfectly natural to him, however different the laws of nature might be there from what we know here." -- THE CREATIVE PROCESS IN THE INDIVIDUAL, page 46.

Subconsciousness is the Corporeal Intelligence. We have no self-consciousness which tells us anything directly concerning the complex processes whereby bodies are built, maintained, and reproduced. All these processes are below the threshold of our waking awareness.

Thus in Tarot and the Qabalah they are associated with sleep. During sleep subconsciousness repairs the waste of the body, and it is during sleep that multiplication, in alchemy, goes on. Subconsciousness has built, repaired, reproduced and transformed all the vehicles of the Life-power. Beginning with atoms, it has developed all the mineral, vegetable and animal bodies on this planet, and wherever else life is manifest.

In the process of alchemical multiplication the Corporeal Intelligence tinges every one of the thirty trillion cells of the physical body with the illuminated consciousness of the adept. The result is a subtle change in the physical vehicle, and in the alchemist's finer bodies. The principal chemical changes are in the blood stream, and recent developments in biology make it seem probable that these changes have to do with the functions of the ductless glands which are connected with the great nerve centers which alchemists call "their" metals: Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, etc.

After the process of multiplication is perfected, the whole organism of the alchemist is so changed that many extraordinary phenomena are observed in its presence. All the stories of miracles may be accounted for in this way. That is to say, the transformed vehicle of an adept can interrupt and transform rates of the Life-power's electromagnetic vibration which have no effect on the body of an ordinary human being. An adept in alchemy can utilize directly, with no other instrument than his own body, currents of the universal energy whereby every form in his physical environment may be changed, if there be any good reason for effecting such a transformation. Such an adept truly possesses the universal medicine, and he can heal all diseases and even raise the dead.

Understand that here not the least tinge of metaphor is to be understood. We mean exactly what we say, and there is abundant evidence available for persons who are properly qualified to receive it. Even to the transmutation of physical metals, the claims of alchemy are to be understood literally. The transmuting instrument is the body of the alchemist himself, subtly changed by the Great Work, so that by mental imagery alone he



can make matrices into which the universal substance will flow and congeal into actual physical forms.

In the space which remains we wish to speak first of projection, which is sometimes included among the twelve stages of the Great Work, but which does not really belong to the Work itself. For projection is impossible until the Great Work is completed.

In the physical sense, projection is the transmutation of the base metals, or even the refuse of the earth into pure gold and silver. Let us repeat that this is perfectly possible when the body of the alchemist has been made anew, as heretofore described.

Even more wonderful is the metaphysical aspect of projection. This first of all is able to change human personality, not only physically, but also mentally and morally. The physical transmutation may range all the way from merely establishing normal function in a diseased body to the entire regeneration of the personality, so that all the stages of the Great Work may be rapidly accomplished by the person who has the good fortune to be in contact with a true Master.

The disciples of Jesus enjoyed such an experience. It was their contact with the Master Alchemist which so transformed their lives that unlettered fishermen became subtle exponents of Ageless Wisdom. More recently, the Hindu sage, Ramakrishna, exerted a similar influence although he was not so completely perfected a Master as Jesus. Other Masters of the Great Work have had tremendous powers, though they are not so well known.

We know of one who was able, not so many years ago, to transmit to one of his pupils, chosen by him for this purpose, the entire content of a very recondite system of instruction embodying the principles of Ageless Wisdom. This was accomplished in less than three weeks, and the whole body of knowledge which that pupil could not have gained in many years of study, was indelibly impressed on his subconsciousness, together with the means of recovering it.

Do not misunderstand us. The pupil did not comprehend what had been projected on his brain-cells. He simply received it, and was enabled to grasp certain fundamental principles by reason of his contact with a Master Teacher. In the years which have passed since then, he has entered gradually into a better understanding of some of the instruction and will go on developing his understanding during the rest of his life. Yet the instruction itself was impressed on him as a whole and all of it can be reproduced, word for word, at any time.

This is an unusual, but by no means unique, instance of mental application of the principle of alchemical projection. There are many persons who are more or less unconscious vehicles for some alchemist's mental projection. Thus Patanjali says one of the results of success in yoga is that the yogi can enter the bodies of others. By this, he does not mean that the yogi ousts the original occupant of that body, or even that he overshadows that other's personality to the extent of obsessing it. Masters of Insight know what personalities may be suitable vehicles for the higher knowledge. Thus it often occurs that a person who supposes himself to be a discoverer, or an original



thinker, is really only a relay station, so to say, for the consciousness of an adept.

In this connection, Ripley warns us against making projection upon uncleansed metals. Understand here that metals represent not only the seven great centers of the human body, but also that the term metal is applied to the entire human personality whose functions are directed through the activity of these centers. To the extent that your consciousness is enlightened, to that extent are you already an alchemist. Beware how you attempt to transfer your enlightenment to unprepared persons. "Cast not your pearls before swine."

Neither be hasty to communicate your knowledge to many. On this point Ripley says we should first make projection on ten, and then through the action of these upon a hundred, and so on. Tyros are always in a hurry to convert the world. Wise men know this conversion must needs be a gradual process. Thus THE FAMA FRATERNITATIS relates that our Father and Brother C.R. called unto himself at first only three persons, and then four more, and that by these eight the whole Invisible Rosicrucian Order was established.

Finally, now that we have finished our survey of the stages of the Great Work, let us remind you that the order in which they are given here is not the only order. There are various slight differences, in terminology and arrangement, among the various writings on the Great Art.

Consider this well, for it is very much to the point. Too much emphasis is laid by some on exact and restricted definition and procedure. Keep in mind the fundamental principle: The sages never lie, for a sage cannot; but they are never so much to be suspected as when they seem to speak most openly. Whether we like it or not, the sages remain true to their obligations to secrecy.

This is as true now as ever it was, and as we review the pages of this course, we find that there is many a passage in which we have done our best to be explicit, and in which we have actually succeeded in being perfectly clear, which will seem involved and difficult to many a reader. For the nature of the central secret of alchemy is such that it can be stated clearly to none but those who already know it. You understand the language if you have the experience. When you who read this share our knowledge, you will know our words are plain and true.

The next four lessons of this course, then, will be devoted to specific instruction in the procedures whereby the necessary knowledge may be made part of your mental equipment.

Some of it will come to you from the depths of subconsciousness; and thus it is accurate to say that you possess already no small part of this knowledge. The rest is yours, also, but will come into your field of conscious awareness from an inner higher source.

That source is truly your Self; yet, unless you have already attained to conscious union with that Self (and if so, you need neither study nor practice alchemy or yoga), this higher knowledge is not yet your personal possession. To make it so is the purpose of what the last four lessons teach. Follow their instruction and you will KNOW.



# THE GREAT WORK

## GREAT WORK

### Lesson Forty-nine

Since, as Eliphas Levi tells us, the Great Work is "pre-eminently the creation of man by himself, that is, the full and complete conquest which he can make of his faculties and his future," it is self-evident that the practices used in the work must involve acts of mental creation directed toward a specific aim. This aim, Levi says further, is the perfect emancipation of the alchemist's will.

Throughout the B.O.T.A. instruction, it has been explained again and again that the magical will, which the Great Work is designed to emancipate, is not "personal." It is the current of the Universal Will, and its "emancipation" is accomplished by ridding subconsciousness of the erroneous interpretations of experience which results from hasty, superficial examination of the world reported to man by his sensations. The Will in itself is perfectly free. What must be overcome are the delusions that distort its expression through its centers of personal manifestation.

We might compare the Universal Will to a current of electro-magnetic energy, and, indeed, its physical manifestations are really electrical in nature. Suppose a current of such energy to be working through the waves sent out from a broadcasting station. The energy itself is free, and the apparatus at the station being in perfect order, what goes out from the microphone is a true expression of the voice or music being broadcast. Yet, if there be defects in the radio set which receives these waves the sounds are distorted. Thus what comes out of the loud-speaker may give a wholly erroneous notion of what comes from the station. Extend this analogy a little and you may conceive a human personality as being a receiving set to which are communicated impulses which take form as thought, speech and action. When personality is a clear channel, thoughts, words and deeds carry into full manifestation the power of the Universal Will. When there is poor reception, the expression is equally poor.

We shall not pause here to show the fallacy of the arguments advanced by persons who contend that this conception of human personality makes a human being a sort of robot or puppet. The fallacy is not difficult to expose, but we need space for other matters. Enough to remind you that no Master of the Great Art feels, thinks or acts as if he were a robot. Quite the contrary. Yet all agree that personality does, and can do, nothing of or by itself.

Without exception they tell us, "You must needs act as if you had free will, and in truth you have, for there is no will anywhere in the universe that is not free. To make the best use of it, however, you must realize the truth that your will-power, though you feel it at the center of your personality, comes into the field of personal activity from a super-personal source."

This, as you have learned from Tarot, is the purport of the symbol of an uplifted wand in the Magician's right hand. The Magician is the Tarot picture of what alchemy calls Mercury, and in mythology Mercury is the scribe, messenger and herald of the gods. So, in the art of astrology, Mercury is held to be a neutral planet, taking on the characteristics of the planets with which it is in aspect.



## THE GREAT WORK

Similarly, human self-consciousness, the true Mercury of the Sages, does not originate the powers it works with. The better it functions, the more accurate its powers of discrimination, the more evident does it become that human personality is an instrument, a tool, a means of expression for the Life-power. From which it follows that the Great Work "emancipates" the will by making human personality a clear channel for powers having their origin at a super-personal, superconscious level.

Intellectual recognition of this superpersonal level of the Life-power's activity is therefore a *sinequa non* for success in alchemy. One must use one's brains to be an alchemist. Lazy acceptance of creeds and traditions does not lead to the necessary mental grasp. Nor will luke-warm affirmation of the reality of the Superconscious Life suffice. The mind of the alchemist must be renewed. It must take fresh hold on the idea of a Higher Power.

Consequently, the first steps in practice must be those to which we have already given some space in Lesson Four. You will do well to give that lesson a thorough review before going farther with this one. We do not wish to be over-insistent, but experience has led us to realize that it is precisely in these preliminary stages of the Great Work that the would-be alchemist is most likely to fail.

When you have finished your review of the fourth lesson, probe deep into your heart to see whether or not you do really measure up to the high standard set in the second paragraph by the quotation from Basil Valentine. Your theological notions about God are of little importance here. What is more to the point is that you be filled with a "heavenly intention," and a determination to make your personal life conform to the ideals set forth by Valentine. Without this, nobody ever yet succeeded in the Great Work. Without this, nobody ever can discover the First Matter.

Thus the first care of the alchemist must be to call into his field of personality the influx of power from above. He must mentally reach upward toward that power. He must make himself keenly aware that it is really at hand, really operative in every detail of his personal existence. This keen awareness does not come all at once. It takes practice which, though simple to describe, will be found to call for serious effort. Over and over again the alchemist must remind himself that the power which can transmute his personality is continually at work. "Nothing moveth, but by my power," says THE BOOK OF TOKENS, and what the alchemist or yogi aims at, first of all, is a continual realization of this truth.

Remind yourself frequently that every one of your mental states is a transformation of super-personal, superconscious energy. Tell yourself many times a day that your words are made possible by the same power, and watch your speech to see that it gives adequate expression to so exalted a source. Look to the actions of your body in the same way. By such practices, repeated until they become second nature, you will begin to effect the necessary renewal of your mind.

One almost immediate consequence of this practice will be to put a curb on that unruly member, the human tongue. Not that you will fall into dour taciturnity. On the contrary, an outstanding mark of true adepts is that they speak well, and that theirs is a



cheerful, sociable spirit. When you accustom yourself to remembering the true source of your power to say anything at all, you cannot help being moved to make what you say the best possible expression of that power. The same principle applies to what one does. When the actions of the physical body are comprehended as being expressions of the Divine Being, the natural consequence is to refrain from unworthy deeds, and to make those actions which the body does carry out as efficient and well-executed as possible.

Set exercises for invoking the Superconscious Life are of little or no value. Bear in mind that the subtle must be separated from the gross with great ingenuity. It takes thought and attention to keep ever in mind the truth that the invisible, subtle Life-power is the mover in all the functions of personality. You can't become an alchemist by rote.

There is a hint of this in the symbolism of Key 1 of Tarot. On the Magician's table lie the essential elements of his practice, the implements of magical art. They are, as you know, related to the elements from which all forms in man's sphere of sensation are built up. Yet they lie on the table in no particular pattern. The Magician may arrange them as he likes. He may pick up any one of his implements, his choice depending on the nature of the work of the moment. No set formula binds him.

Thus, in this lesson, and in those that follow, our endeavor is to indicate principles of action, rather than to furnish you with recipes for behavior. Principle, as Judge Troward (no mean alchemist himself) was fond of saying, is not bound by precedent. A true magician, a true alchemist, a true yogi is and must be, spontaneous. Set rules are not for him. Living by principle, he is free from slavery to convention.

On the other hand, he will seldom be found deliberately flouting other peoples' notions of "good form." Violate his principles he will not, and sometimes this may bring him into conflict with stodgy supporters of local taboos. One of the fruits of success in the Great Work is savoir faire. Great adepts are always great gentlemen. They know what to do, how to do it, and when. Consistent surrender to the Higher Life assures this.

Now, in Lesson Four, and elsewhere in this course, we have spoken of the Sun and Moon as having a connection with the hot and cool currents of Prana, Surya and Rayi. This is correct, but there is yet a deeper meaning to the alchemical dictum that the Great Work is an operation of the Sun and Moon.

The force corresponding to Sol is what the Hindus term Surya. The source of this current, however, is also designated by the term Sol, or Gold. It is what is represented on the Tree of Life by Tiphareth, Sphere of the Sun and seat of the Central Ego. To make the Philosophers' Stone is: (1) to establish a fixed, stable awareness of the Central Ego; (2) to share in that Ego's permanent knowledge of the true nature of what goes on in the field of sensation, particularly of what goes on in the "Kingdom of Stone," or the mineral kingdom.

The Central Ego is never deluded by the appearances in the field of sensation. It understands them to be what they really are -- phenomena of Universal Consciousness. Thus it knows them to be responsive to the true will-power. Unenlightened human beings take these appearances as they look, and during thousands of years their ignorance



has filled the race mind with the notion that external conditions are determinants of human thought and action. In truth, the reverse is the case, and all magical works of power are the outcome of the operator's knowledge that the physical conditions surrounding him are precipitations of mental states. Change the mind, and you change the condition.

The force corresponding to Luna is what is named Rayi in Sanskrit. The source of this current is represented on the Tree of Life by the ninth Sephirah, Yesod, Sphere of the Moon and seat of the Vital Soul, Nefesh. It is the field of reflection. Like the moon in the sky, its light is not its own but comes from the Central Ego.

Consequently, the work of the Sun and Moon may be understood to be a work in which the influx of power from the Central Ego, above the level of ordinary personal consciousness, is combined with the astral fluid or substance which has its seat in Yesod. It is therefore graphically represented by the symbolism of Tarot Key 14, where the symbols depict the angel of the Sun as the operator, while an eagle and a lion, symbols of the animal nature or Vital Soul, are the subjects of the operation.

Now, the number of Key 14 reduces to 5, so that we may understand that in some sense the Key is connected with Intuition, or the Hierophant. Then, if we ask, "How does 5 become manifest as 14?" the answer is, "By the action of 9," because 5 plus 9 equal 14. In this way we are led to understand that even though the actual operation of the Great Work is carried on by the angel pictured in Key 14, an indispensable element is supplied by self-consciousness, or Mercury, the ruler of Virgo, corresponding to the Hermit.

This means that whenever a human being is ripe enough to participate in the Great Work, he becomes intellectually aware of the principles involved, and responds actively to the light he receives through the revelations of Intuition.

Nor is this all. His active response has a special intention. He becomes a conscious instrument of the Universal Will, to the end that his physical body may be made a clear channel for that Will. In practice, he sets himself to realize in his own person the goal of the Great Work.

In order to accomplish this, he makes use of the selective power of self-consciousness (Mercury) to provide his physical body with the life essentials necessary to perfect it. Furthermore, he makes use of the self-conscious power of suggestion to impress his subconsciousness (seat of Nefesh, the Vital Soul) with the patterns whereby he may provide himself with a physical body fit to be a vehicle for the One Self.

Most people take their bodies for granted. They think of them as things, not as collections of myriads of living, animal cells. They think of ill-health as being caused by external conditions, and as for good health, they seldom give any thought to its causes.

The truth being that good health or ill health are consequences primarily of states of mind, it is easy to see the true cause of most of our physical suffering. When we take the wise counsel of THE CHALDEAN ORACLES and explore the River of the Soul far enough to get some idea whence we have come, we begin to understand that we need not



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be servants of our bodies, subject to the caprices of the Vital Soul. The body of an adept is his servant, and when he is perfected, his power over it is such that he can integrate it or disintegrate it at will, without dying or suffering.

Thus, in the Great Work, the first stage of success is called the White Work, or Work of Luna, and this has to do with the purification of the automatic consciousness, or Vital Soul. It is followed by the Red Work, or Work of Sol, in which the purified physical body becomes the instrument for various works of power.

Yet the indispensable first steps toward these final stages are those with which we have been concerned in this lesson. What follows these first steps will be considered in the remaining lessons of the course.

In my supreme abode stand I as the Onlooker.  
Because of my unwavering contemplation  
The stream of manifestation continueth on its course.

Whatsoever existeth  
Hath its beginning in my Will,  
Continueth in my Will,  
And by my Will cometh at last to its appointed end.  
Than this, indeed, there is no other will  
In all the universe,  
Yet in it do all creatures have a part.

(From the BOOK OF TOKENS by Dr. Paul Foster Case)



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### Lesson Fifty

Man himself is the subject of the alchemical operation. Man is the First Matter. Man is the STONE. Every true sage affirms this again and again. Consider, for example, these words of Alipili, in a treatise named THE CENTER OF NATURE CONCENTRATED; or, THE SALT OF NATURE REGENERATED (which title, by the way, is itself a summary of our whole philosophy):

"He that hath the knowledge of the Microcosm, cannot long be ignorant of the knowledge of the Macrocosm. This is that which the Egyptian industrious searchers of Nature so often said, and loudly proclaimed --that every one should KNOW HIMSELF. This speech their dull disciples (the Greeks) took in a moral sense, and in ignorance affixed it to their Temples. But I admonish thee, whosoever thou art, that desirest to dive into the inmost parts of Nature, if that which thou seekest thou findest not within thee, thou wilt never find it without thee. If thou knowest not the excellency of thine own house, why dost thou seek and search after the excellency of other things? The universal Orb of the world contains not so great mysteries and excellences as a little Man, formed by God to his own Image. And he who desires the primacy amongst the students of Nature, will nowhere find a greater or better field of study than himself. Therefore will I follow the example of the Egyptians, and from my whole heart, and certain true experience proved by me, speak to my neighbor in the words of the Egyptians, and with a loud voice do not proclaim: O MAN, KNOW THYSELF, in Thee is hid the Treasure of Treasures."

Now, in reading anything written by a true alchemist, we must remember Paracelsus' saying about the "use of the Qabalists." For alchemy, yoga and Qabalah are essentially one in significance and purpose and the practical work in alchemy is simply the application of Qabalistic principles to the regeneration of human personality. He who knows the elements of Qabalah, therefore, cannot miss the inner purport of the words house and field in the foregoing quotation. The house is the name of the letter Beth. The field is the name of the letter Cheth.

To "know the excellency of thine own house" is to know the true value and potency of what Qabalists call "The Intelligence of Transparency," the mode of consciousness attributed to the letter Beth. To direct that power aright is to labor in the true field, which Tarot symbolizes by Key 7. Here are clues which lead to the very heart of the alchemical mystery.

The Intelligence of Transparency is human self-consciousness, and this is also the Mercury of the Sages. When it is turned outward into the field of changing appearances and is deluded by those appearances, it is the "crude Mercury," full of venom. Then it is identified with the impure desire-nature, described in the symbolic language of THE BOOK OF LAMBSPRING as a savage dragon.

Yet this same self-consciousness, turned inward, toward the Central Point of human personality, kills the dragon and transforms his venom into the healing balm, or Universal Medicine. Consequently, the practical work of an alchemist begins with practices, mental in nature, which change the field of attention.



The unenlightened person thinks of himself as living in the world presented to his mind by his field of sensation. When he seeks power, he looks for it in things. When he desires supply, he hunts for it outside himself. The true sage reverses this mistaken use of self-consciousness. He turns his attention inward, toward the unfailing Source of Life and Power. He knows that the kingdom is within, that the treasure is within, that the Throne of the Divine Royalty is within; and he reverses the current of his mental activity in order to identify himself with the Inner Center.

Do not misunderstand us. We do not mean you to think that your whole life must be spent in turning your attention to the Center of Being. Nor do we mean to suggest that you must repudiate all contact with the outer world. You must, it is true, give time to practices which will establish your awareness of the Central Presence which Key 14 of Tarot pictures as an angel. This practice is the ascent from earth to heaven mentioned in THE EMERALD TABLET. It is indispensable, because mastery of conditions and circumstances cannot be achieved without establishing what Alipili calls "certain true experience proved by me." Certain true experience of the real presence of the All-power as being what Tarot pictures as the rider in the chariot of human personality is something very different from mere belief that there is such an indwelling Presence. This experience is, in the truest sense, an operation of what used to be called "Divine Grace," or what alchemists term "The Operation of the Sun."

By this we mean what we have said over and over again in these lessons. It is not that we ourselves do anything whatever. Yet, in the first stages of the Great Work, we seem ourselves to be the operators. We feel that we must exert ourselves. There is a strong sense of personal effort and personal aspiration. The fire of zealous and persistent determination must burn strong within us. That it does burn is one of the unfailing signs that our personalities are being transmuted by the Great Alchemist, the Grand Master of the Work, the Central SELF. He who does not feel that flame within him is not yet ripe for the work.

Equally unready is the person who, hearing or reading that the Central SELF is the only Worker, says to himself, "Then there is nothing for me to do. The Life-Power will take care of me, all in good time." Thus it is written: "Not every one that saith unto me Lord! Lord! shall enter the kingdom." Mere intellectual assent to the doctrine that the only true Thinker and Actor is the Central SELF is not enough.

Intellectual assent there must be, of course. But this is only preliminary to the "certain true experience." The latter comes as a result of practice.

The practice, as we indicated in the preceding lesson, does not consist in vain repetitions of verbal formulas. Notice that we are careful to say "vain repetitions." In all work of this sort, there must be a good deal of repetition, just as there must be repetition in any kind of practice intended to establish one in some special skill.

What must be avoided is the habit, easy to fall into, of empty repetition. This is why we counsel you to use your own words, and to devise your own formulas. There is bound to be more real meaning in a phrase you have made yourself than in anything invented by another person. Your first endeavors to put these principles into words for your own use may seem to be clumsy and inadequate. Don't let that disturb you. Practice will enable



you to do better and better as time goes by. Be on your guard, however, when you do find yourself fashioning your thought in more polished phrases. When one reaches this degree of skill, there is always a temptation to think more of form than of substance; and there is even greater danger of using some favorite statement so often that it runs through the mind of itself, and in so doing, empties itself of all vital significance. There are, however, certain passages of Scripture which may serve as good models for your own formulas. Two of the very best are Psalms 90 and 91. Another, equally good, is Psalm 23. These Psalms are among the best examples of the verbal expression of a mind skilled in meditation.

The ninetieth Psalm has been responsible for a lot of gloomy theology, but he who can penetrate to its real inwardness will not be led astray by its references to wrath and anger and fear. For this is a picture of the mental state of those whose minds are turned outward into the illusions of appearance. To understand it aright, consider carefully the meaning of the first verse.

Then go on to the ninety-first Psalm and consider the purport of the first two verses. Notice that in both Psalms the key-note is sounded by the words "dwelling-place," "habitation," "secret place of the Most High," "refuge" and "fortress." All these words are related to the occult meaning of Beth, the House. So is the expression "House of Jehovah," in the last verse of Psalm 23.

To dwell in the secret place of the Most High, to make Jehovah our habitation, is to have established conscious contact with the Central Spiritual Reality. Psalm 91 shows us the consequences of this "certain true experience" that we do actually live in that Reality, just as Psalm 90 shows the confusion and emptiness of self-consciousness deluded by the illusions of the outer world.

Let the second part of your practice, therefore, be a daily and hourly turning of the current of your self-consciousness toward the Central Presence. At first, you will be likely to feel that your mental gaze is fixed on a dark void. Persist, and you will see the Inner Light, and from the Center of that Light will come a Voice. Listen to the Voice, and heed its counsel. Then you will learn more than can be taught by all the books in the world.



# THE GREAT WORK

## GREAT WORK

### Lesson Fifty - one

As we come to the close of this series of lessons, we find ourselves wondering how many will grasp the real purport of this course. For though we have endeavored to speak more openly than was possible for some of the earlier writers on alchemy, since the spirit of our times is such that we run no such risk of persecution from church or state as did they, we are, nevertheless, still under the bonds of our obligation to those from whom we have received the more important part of our knowledge of alchemy. The central secret of the Art cannot, as we have told you many times, be communicated by words. It is, so to say, led up to by the language of the alchemical writings, but the only source of instruction as to this central secret is the Wise Teacher mentioned by so many writers on this subject. And, unless one finds that Wise Teacher, the words used by alchemists are never understood by the readers of their books. This is just as true of our words as of those of earlier writers.

Thus we must remind you that however clear may be some of our explanations, especially of the Qabalistic terms in alchemy, they will be certain to be misunderstood, and misapplied, by persons who neglect the primary doctrine that the STONE is MAN, and that the Great Work is directed toward the transmutation of human personality. On this point, the student will do well to consider very carefully the inner significance of the words of the author of a work entitled DE MANNA BENEDICTO (The Blessed Manna):

"Whosoever thou art who readest this Tract, let me advise thee rather to fix thy mind and soul on God, in keeping his commandments, than upon the love of this Art (here understand, the love of alchemy, because of advantages it may offer), for though it be the only, nay, all the wisdom of the world, yet doth it come short of the divine wisdom of the Soul, which is the Love of God in keeping his commandments . . . Hast thou been covetous, profane? be meek and holy, and serve in all humility thy most glorious Creator: if thou dost not resolve to do this, thou dost but whitewash an Ethiopian, and shall waste an earthly estate, hoping to attain this science.

"There is no human art which can snatch it from the Almighty's hand; nor was it ever, and I am persuaded it never shall be, given but to such as are of upright hearts."

Again, Eirenaeus Philalethes, in his commentary on Ripley, says:

"We have plainly and faithfully done our duty, and by a line, as it were, have separated the false from the true; yet we know that in the world our writings will prove as a curious edged knife: to some they shall carve out dainties, but to others they shall serve only to cut their fingers: yet we are not to be blamed; for we do seriously admonish all who shall attempt this work, that they undertake the highest piece of philosophy in nature; and though we write in English, yet our matter will be as hard as Greek to some, who will think nevertheless that they understand us well, when they misconstrue our meaning most perversely; for is it imaginable that they who are fools in nature, should be wise in our books, which are testimonies unto nature? . . . For all this work of the Artist is only to help nature; we can do no more; yea, we have professed and will continue to profess that we do but administer unto nature herein. For all the works of God are entire; we



can but behold them and admire them, and therefore seek our principles where nature is, and amend nature in its own nature. Whereas those who work upon other matters do most shamefully betray their ignorance. They do not consider the possibility of nature, but work after their fancy."

The average person who undertakes to be an occultist is in quest of power, health, or happiness. There is nothing wrong with these aims. But if we seek their satisfaction in the sphere of sensation, in the "false world outside," then are we numbered among those whom the author of THE BLESSED MANNA calls "covetous" and "profane."

A profane person is not one who is given to cursing--even though it must needs be that the verbal expression of his thoughts will include more curses than blessings. In the Latin, profanus signifies "outside the Temple." He who is absorbed in the phantasmagoria of the Without, is one of the profane.

As such, he cannot avoid being covetous, for it will appear to him that whatever he seems to himself to lack is in the possession of others. He seeks "a place in the sun," unaware that the spiritual Sun is within him. He is envious of the possessions, the health, the happiness of others. He is one of the "have-nots," and to his warped, jealous mind, they whom he numbers among the "haves" are his natural enemies. He is poor, unrecognized --a forgotten man. Every hand is raised against him.

The cure for this is to be "holy." The original sense of "holy" is "Whole, well, sound." They who are covetous and profane are spiritually ill. They are imperfectly integrated personalities, such as Nietzsche's mad fancy pictured, when he complained that he was surrounded by a motley collection of heads, hands and bellies, instead of complete human beings.

This is one reason the STONE is called also the Universal Medicine. For when the personal consciousness is united with the superconscious "Son," located by Qabalists in Tiphareth, then the personal consciousness shares in the Son's union with the Father, symbolized in the spelling of the Hebrew word for stone, **יֶסֶד**.

Thus the practice of the Great Work calls for a third endeavor, in addition to the invocation of spiritual power from the level of superconsciousness, in addition to the daily and hourly turning of the mind inward toward the Center. This third endeavor is summed up in one word--Love.

For we can seek power from above, and make strenuous efforts to reach the Inner Center, and yet miss the one indispensable thing. We may know intellectually that power comes from the superconscious, and be persuaded that the treasure of treasures is hidden within man himself. Yet if we seek power in order to wield it over others, or hunt for the treasure in order to give us an advantage over our fellows, we shall fail miserably in our quest for the Stone of the Wise.

This is why, back in the lessons on SEVEN STEPS, we took pains to make it clear that in our development of definite images of what we want to be and do, we must never forget to include the fact that man is a social being. Power we must have. Keen awareness of the Central Presence is necessary. But you will remember that, in the picture of the



Magician, his left hand points toward the earth; and his attention is fixed on a garden full of lilies and roses, symbols of knowledge and love.

The true occultist never forgets that he is in this school of life to gain knowledge and understanding of man, and to perfect himself in the art of love. Nor will you, if you have really studied this course, have overlooked the fact that in Hebrew the word for stone, **אבן**, is the number 53, which is also the numeral value of **החן**, khammaw, the Sun (a word particularly associated with the Sephirah Tiphareth), and the value of **גן**, gan, garden.

Now, the Tarot Magician stands for the alchemical Mercury. Thus the lilies and roses in his garden represent the white (lilies) and red (roses) stages of the Great Work. In all alchemical writings, the red stage is said to be the final completion of the Operation of the Sun. That is, knowledge and understanding though necessary, are but preliminary to love, and without love there is no fulfillment.

The Garden, then, and the Stone and the Sun, are all the ONE THING. The flowers in an actual garden are fed by the chemical elements of decomposed stone, and grow by the power of the sun. Human personalities, the flowers in the garden of life, are fed by the physical elements, and grow by the power of the spiritual Sun. This we must know, and when we really do know it, we cannot help loving our fellow-men.

Talking "love" and "brotherhood" is not the practice of the art of love. An art it is, and the greatest of arts--"the highest piece of philosophy in nature." Skill in it comes only from long practice, and, just as in other arts our first attempts at practice fall far short of perfection, so in the work of acquiring skill in the art of love, we may fail, at first, far more often than we succeed.

The thing to do is to keep on trying. Nor is there any great mystery about the method. It is all summed up in the wise counsel of the best of alchemists: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that despitefully use you." Here we speak without any veils of metaphor. Not for the wise occultist is the meaningless, abstract love for humanity that fools prate about. In the practice we speak of now, the objects are definite and specific. Not those who are "our sort," not those for whom we feel a spontaneous sympathy, but those who "rub us the wrong way," and seem to us to be our natural antagonists, provide us daily and hourly with an inexhaustible supply of raw material for this part of the practice of alchemy. This is the true inwardness of the words of Lao-tze: "Evil men are the materials with which wise men work."



## THE GREAT WORK

### GREAT WORK

#### Lesson Fifty-two

The alchemist Artephius, writing of water, calls it "a living water which comes to moisten the earth, that it may spring forth, and in due season bring forth much fruit." He compares it to rain, saying "it penetrates the bodies and makes one new body of two bodies." He continues:

"This aqua vitae, or water of life being rightly ordered, and disposed with the body, it whitens it, and converts or changes it into a white color.

"How precious, then, and how great a thing is this water! for without it the Work could never be done or perfected: it is also called vas naturae, the belly, the womb, the receptacle of the tincture, the earth, the nurse. It is the royal fountain in which the King (Sol) and Queen (Luna) bathe themselves; and the mother which must be put into and sealed up within the belly of her infant; and that is Sol himself, who proceeded from her, and whom she brought forth; and therefore they have loved one another as mother and son, and are conjoined together, because they came from one root and are of the same substance and nature. And because this water is the water of the vegetable life, it causes the dead body to vegetate, increase, and spring forth, and to rise from death to life, by being dissolved first and then sublimed. And in doing this the body is converted into a spirit, and the spirit afterwards into a body; and then is made the amity, the peace, the concord, and the union of contraries, to wit, between the body and the spirit, which reciprocally or naturally change their natures, which they receive and communicate one to another through their most minute parts.

"In this operation the Body is made a Spirit of a most subtle nature; and again, the Spirit is corporified and changed into the nature of the Body, with the Bodies, whereby our STONE consists of a Body, a Soul and a Spirit.

"It appears, then, that this composition is not a work of the hands, but a change of the natures; because nature dissolves, and joins itself, sublimes and lifts itself up, and grows white, being separated from the faeces . . . Our Brass or Latten then is made to ascend by the degrees of Fire, but of its own accord, freely, and without violence. But when it ascends on high, it is born in the Air or Spirit, and is changed into a spirit; and becomes Life with Life. And by such an operation it is that the Body is made of a subtle nature, and the Spirit is incorporated with the Body, and made one with it; and by such a sublimation, conjunction, and raising up, the whole, Body and Spirit, are made white."

We have given you this long quotation in this last lesson, because it is one of the best short summaries of the Great Work. If you carry out the suggestions given in the three preceding lessons, and then meditate on this doctrine of Artephius, you should have little difficulty in becoming proficient in the alchemical practice.

The "water" of which he speaks is, first of all, the primary substance, or First Matter. Yet it is also the Mercury of the Sages which is pictured in Tarot as the Magician.



To understand this better, consider that the path on the Tree of Life corresponding to the Magician is that which joins Kether to Binah. The water of life which passes from the superconscious level (Kether) to the subconscious level (Binah) is a fluid which will not wet the hand. It is the subtle vital fluid which the Magician receives from above, and which he communicates to the garden below him, from which spring the symbols of the red and white stages of the Great Work.

The garden is Binah, and represents the subconscious level of the universal life. Yet Binah is said also to be the Great Sea, the Mother, and the Root of Water. Hence she is called "vas naturea (the vase of nature), the belly, the womb, the receptacle of the tincture, the earth, the nurse," by our author.

It is on this account that he goes on to say that she is the mother of Sol, who proceeded from her. That is to say, Binah is the subconsciousness of Hekhidah, the Cosmic SELF, but she is also the mother of Adam, or the King (Sol). This royal MAN is the STONE, and is the EGO seated in Tiphareth. Our part in the Great Work is to unite our personal consciousness with that Central EGO.

In order to do this, we must make use of the Mercurial Water, which "penetrates the bodies, and makes one new body of two bodies." Here is the same thing that is mentioned by other alchemists when they say the subject of the alchemical operation is, at the beginning of the work, termed Rebis, or "Two-Thing."

In the ordinary, ignorant personality, the "two bodies" are continually contending, one with the other. The secret here is that man has several vehicles, or "bodies," of which one is the physical body, and another the vehicle corresponding to Nefesh, the Vital or Animal Soul. This latter is sometimes known as the Astral Body.

This subtler inner vehicle is just as truly a body as is the physical organism. But until it is purified, together with its physical counterpart, the two bodies cannot be brought into the state which Artephius calls "amity, peace, concord, and the union of contraries." Of this concord, Key 6 of Tarot is one symbol. Consequently, to all you have learned heretofore concerning this Key, you may now add that the man in the picture is the embodied self-consciousness, or physical organism, while the woman is the embodied sub-consciousness, or astral vehicle.

While these two are out of harmony or even directly antagonistic, as is the case with the greater number of human beings, the personality is in the condition which the Sages indicate by the word "dead." Nor is this a mere figure of speech. It is because the two component parts of personality are in disharmony that the physical body must die and be reborn--again and again. Consequently, in yoga, the alchemy of the Orient, one of the main objectives is to free personality from the necessity for reincarnation. This can be accomplished in but one manner. The purpose of incarnation must be fulfilled.

It is not to escape incarnation that we enter upon the Great Work. What we are really seeking is release from the necessity for dying and being born. The ordinary human falls far short of the true purpose of incarnation. That purpose is to provide an adequate personal vehicle through which the Central EGO, or Adam the King, may express itself. They who succeed in the Great Work accomplish just this, and therefore is it asserted by



Artephius that they who know how to make use of the heavenly water are enabled by means of it to make the "dead body . . . spring forth, and rise from death to life."

The consequence of success in the Great Work is the actual production of a new BODY in which are perfectly blended the powers of the subtle, astral vehicle of subconsciousness and the potencies of the gross, physical vehicle of self-consciousness. Only, when the Great Work is finished, the adjective "gross" is hardly applicable to the new body.

This is not outwardly very much different from the ordinary physical organism. The differences are internal, rather than external. And in other lessons of our various courses we have said enough concerning this to make repetition needless here. Our purpose, in this lesson, is to turn your mind directly toward the objective of the Great Work, so that you may, if you are called to it, know what you must do.

Here it may be well to remind you that you have all eternity in which to complete the operation. This does not mean that you will have to wait forever. If you grasp the basic principles, and begin to work in harmony with them, you may possibly finish the Great Work in this present incarnation. Or, if you do not progress that far, you may get such a good start that you can carry on the Work, in full consciousness, after you have laid aside your present physical body. In such case, you will complete the Great Work from the inner side of life, and your success will be crowned by your ability to project a physical vehicle into incarnation, without having to pass through the gate of birth.

We do not know how to be more explicit than this. Yet we know also that only a few will really understand this doctrine. It has always been reserved for a minority in every generation of humanity; and the law which brings this about cannot be set aside.

One more point. Pay special attention to the last paragraph of the quotation in this lesson, and to the first sentence of that paragraph. Compare that sentence with what has been said in these lessons concerning the Virgin's Milk, and what goes on in the region of the human body corresponding to the sign Virgo.

Finally, consider well these Tarot Keys: 1, 6 and 9. They represent the Mercurial influence. Note that the sum of their numbers is 16, corresponding to the Tower, and that this, in turn, reduces to 7, the number of the Chariot. These five Keys constitute a perfect summary of the Great Work.

May their light be extended upon you.



Proficiency Test

In answering these questions, write on one side only of letter-size sheets (8-1/2 x 11). Put your name and address at the top of the first page and number each answer to correspond to the number of each question. Do not copy the questions. Make your answers brief. A certificate will be issued to you upon your passing the following examination.

1. What is the Philosopher's Stone?
2. What is the athanor furnace of the Alchemist?
3. Name the alchemical metals and their correspondences?
4. What preparation is essential for the Great Work?
5. What is the initial stage of the work of making the Philosopher's Stone?
6. What do we call the brain center often spoken of as the "Third Eye"?
7. What is the Alchemists' fire?
8. To what is the fire of the Alchemists closely related?
9. What is the power of this fire?
10. What letter of the Tetragrammaton represents this alchemical fire?
11. What does the element of water contain?
12. What is the alchemical water?
13. What is the first work of the alchemist regarding this water?
14. What is the alchemical fire?
15. What is the alchemical earth?
16. Is this alchemical or magical earth visible?
17. What is the objective of the Great Work?
18. How many stages of the Great Work are there and to what do they correspond?
19. Have you studied and practiced the procedures given for the achievement of the Great Work?
20. In what way has the Holy Qabalah effected your life the most?
21. What one point of importance to you stands out above all others in the course of the "Great Work"?